







THE LAST YEARS OF THE  
ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE



**Author of :**

**SACRIFICE TO MARS**

**A GIBBET FOR MYSELF (in press)**





SLAVES ON AN AFRICAN QUAY-SIDE

*Frontispiece*

*The Last Years of the*  
ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE  
Liverpool 1750-1807

*by*  
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## PREFACE

**I**N writing this account of the last sixty years of the English slave-trade, I have not attempted to compile a complete history of the trade—which would, indeed, run into many volumes—but rather to recapture the spirit of this period of the traffic through the study of contemporary documents and personal records. In this I have had much assistance and I wish to express my thanks to: Mr. Owen Rutter, without whose encouragement and experienced help and criticism I should never have attempted to write this book; to the late Sir John Harris for his enthusiasm and for suggestions which led me to choose this particular period and angle of approach, and to Miss Batty, his secretary, for her unfailing patience in supplying me with material from the Anti-Slavery Society's library.

My thanks are also due to: Mr. J. F. Smith, the Chief Librarian of the Liverpool Public Libraries, for his kindness and courtesy in collecting and preparing many books and MSS. for my use, and in checking the bibliography, and to Miss Saxton, of the Picton Reference Library's department of Local History—her extensive knowledge of her subject has been invaluable and her advice and information greatly facilitated my researches; to Mrs. Hugh Rathbone for her great kindness in putting the Rathbone family records at my disposal; to Mr. Barnard Faraday, LL.B., for his criticism and advice on all legal points; to Mr. Cregoe Nicholson for his assist-

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A.M-G.

London,  
April 7th, 1941.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE RISE OF LIVERPOOL

**O**N a fine afternoon in the year 1750—the twenty-third year of His Majesty George II—the merchants strutted complacently down Castle Street to the Exchange. Padesois waistcoats, gold buttons, full-bottomed wigs. They sauntered on the quays along forests of swaying masts and in fine Jamaica rum they drank health to the new Act for extending and improving the trade of Liverpool to Africa. They, members of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, had defeated London at last. By the new Act Liverpool's three representatives took their place in committee on an equality with London and Bristol.

London. They smiled tolerantly. London's monopoly of the Guinea trade was gone. The Royal African Company, protected by Charles II, had been rich. It could afford to build full-rigged ships, arm and fit them out for year-long voyages to Guinea and the Indies. But the South Sea Bubble had burst and ruined the London merchants and Bristol had stolen their trade. They were no match for hard-headed Lancashire men. Certainly it was Mr. John Foy of Bristol who had been instrumental in getting equal representation for them all on the London committee, but had he not added, in his letter to the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Plantations: "Bristol and Liverpool are in no ways concerned in trade

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together and upon all occasions rival each other on any Beneficial Branch." The Bristol merchants were extravagant, unbusinesslike, it had been easy to undersell them. Factors in the islands on salary instead of percentage; long-term apprentice seamen instead of a full complement on full pay. The Bristol merchants had treated their captains like young gentlemen on the Grand Tour. Cabin privileges, port allowance and primage. They ate ashore in the West Indian ports and drank imported Madeira. Captains did not pay at five shillings a day. Liverpool captains, who were second to none, were content with £1 a month and, if they got no allowances, they seemed to flourish on salt beef and new rum-punch in the cabin.

Bristol was beaten. They slapped their knees and their laughter haloed them with wig-powder.

The price of slaves, of sugar, of rum. More West Indian coffee, more Jamaica rum—what if the duty on gin was 20/- a gallon, there was always plenty of rum—a pinch of snuff and a fine negro boy to be auctioned at seven o'clock by candle-light. A smart black house-boy for the mansion in Castle Street and Maria would have him dressed to match the new yellow silk hangings.

Liverpool was complacent. Williamson wrote in his *Liverpool Memorandum Book*: "In the last war, 1739 to 1748, trade flourished and spread her golden wings so extensively that, if they had possessed it seven years longer, it would have enlarged the size and riches of the town to a prodigious degree." But the red-brick Customs House by the Old Dock was blazoned not with golden wings but negro heads.

The war with France and Spain was over. The signal beacon stood abandoned on Everton Hill. No one had profited by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle but the King's

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nephew, Frederick of Prussia, who had taken Silesia from Maria Theresa. An easy title to greatness with the Empress fighting for her throne and himself a professed neutral. The Pragmatic Sanction and the Austrian succession had been remote until they touched England's pocket. Interest ousting chivalry, swelling to indignation at Parliament's £300,000 a year voted to the Austrian. Five millions for the war from the English treasury, the English taxpayer, while Hanover, the only likely sufferer, had contributed but 6,000 men. Mr. Pitt was right when he declared England to have become a province of the Electorate.

The House of Hanover had done little to conciliate its British subjects. King George II spent most of his time in Hanover, openly expressed preference for the long low house which was his birthplace. Herrenhausen, with its trimmed French alleys and ornamental fountains, was his home. It was not enough that he could speak in halting English with Sir Robert Walpole instead of in Latin as his father had done. That if he were parsimonious he was also methodical and that he was courageous as well as stubborn. He was detested. He had fought the French at Dettingen and won; Cumberland, his son, had been defeated at Fontenoy by Mareschal Saxe. England cared little for the Germans' victory or defeat. They fought for Hanover. But Commodore Anson had defeated the French off Finisterre and Admiral Hawke had gloriously won the engagement off Belleisle. Those were English victories for which the British navy was responsible and not the Hanoverians.

To Liverpool the war at sea had meant the fitting out of privateers, Letters of Marque and prizes.

Liverpool, despite the loss of over a hundred ships, was more prosperous than she had ever been before.



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The full-rigged ships, the brigs and snows sailed down the Mersey bound for the Guinea coast. Their holds filled with bales: blue bafts, Osnaburg checks, patten chintz and romalls from Manchester; iron and copper bars; anchors of raisin wine and brandy; muskets, powder and flints; to pay for the negroes of Whydah, Accra and Bonny. Africa, the Middle Passage, the West Indies, and they sailed back up the river laden with rum and sugar, goods and slaves profitably sold; fat profits for the owners, bonuses for the captains.

In 1754 the New Exchange was opened in Castle Street. It was also the Town Hall—Liverpool combined municipal and commercial affairs. The architects had emulated the Royal Exchange of London and the citizens celebrated its glory of Doric and Corinthian columns, its redundant ornament and its cupola, with a week of boat races, public breakfasts and balls.

The merchants lived in Castle Street, in Hanover Street, Dale Street and Water Street; in their counting-houses behind, the clerks worked till seven or eight o'clock of an evening in the smell of stored rum and spices from the warehouses.

On Saturdays the merchants would dine at three o'clock instead of one, exchange domesticity and the proximity of account books for the inn and the society of the members of their "clubs."

A game of bowls, a glass of wine, or a concert "at Mr. Wrigley's Great room."

They picked their way over the cobbles, the piles of household and privy refuse, while the ladies were jounced along in their sedan chairs by the blue-frocked carriers.

Liverpool spent her newly-acquired wealth on her docks—the town could wait.

For eight years the windmills turned beyond the



THE HIGH STREET LIVERPOOL

From the Corner of Tithedarn Street, showing the back of the Town Hall and the beginning of the demolition for the New Exchange

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houses, the pottery kilns spread smoke-haze over the roofs, the town's pulse was the shipwright's hammer. The merchants' ladies took country air in the lanes behind Dale Street, where dog-roses and stitchwort grew. The merchants congratulated themselves.

Then the news of French activities encroached on the outer rim of their orbit, threatened the placid accumulation of counting-house and Customs. The Marquis Duquesne, French governor of Canada, was pressing the English out of the Mississippi lands; there had been skirmishing on the Ohio and Lake George; French men-of-war were concentrating in Brest; on the quays it was said that Admiral Boscawen had orders to attack them should they make for St. Lawrence's Bay. The King hastened to conclude treaties with Russia and Hesse. Hanover must be safeguarded. Avuncular affection bowing to necessity and remembrance of Silesia. Newcastle's ministry was shaken. Would Pitt restore its stability? Pitt disdained the seals of German policy, and Fox, less delicate, became Secretary for State.

On 29th June, 1756, the French took Minorca. General Blackeney had been left to his fate by Admiral Byng. Frederick, as an ally, would protect Hanover. Uncle and nephew against Austria, Russia, France and Poland. Newcastle and Fox resigned. England was at war.

Well, the last war had been profitable enough. There was nothing like a war. . . . But the French had to be defeated. Here was another chance of rich prize. Letters of Marque were to be had for the asking. Liverpool manned her privateers.

"All gentlemen, seamen, and able-bodied lanpmen that are willing to fight the French and make their fortunes, may meet with suitable encouragement by entering

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on board the Grand Buck Privateer, Captain John Coppell, Commander. A ship of 300 tons burthen-frigate built, six feet between decks, four aft, mounting twenty carriage guns, twelve, nine and six-pounders, twenty swivels, and two hundred men. N.B. The ship will be ready for sea in a fortnight and now lies in the South Dock. Apply to the Captain; or to Messrs. Robert Clay and Compy., Merchants."

The newspapers of 1756 were full of "suitable encouragement."

But the Liverpool privateers lost nearly as many ships as they took. War was not so profitable. The Frenchmen swarmed round the south coast and blockaded Liverpool. "For a third cruise against the enemies of Great Britain, the fortunate ship Liverpool, privateer, under the command of Capt. John Ward, will be ready for sea as soon as she comes out of the graving dock. . . . All gentlemen, seamen and others who are willing to try their fortunes . . ." It was a familiar advertisement now, after four years of war.

The Liverpool had, however, taken many prizes under Captain William Hutchinson, and would doubtless take many more, and this cruise, as the Editor of the *Advertiser* put it, was "an attempt to curb the insolence of Monsieur Thurot, of the Marshal Belleisle privateer, cruising in the North Channel, to intercept the trade of this neighbourhood." Two hundred and seven seamen and gentlemen signed the articles, but only twenty-eight appeared when the Liverpool was ready for sea, and before enquiry had been made Monsieur Thurot and his squadron were driving on up the Irish Sea. He had had the impertinence to land at Islay and requisition food. A cod-smack brought the news. And this after Admiral Hawke had destroyed the French fleet in Quiberon Bay

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and Admiral Harvey had bombarded Havre!

Liverpool to be attacked by the French? Liverpool in this year of grace 1760 was the second port of the realm. The merchants would defend her if His Majesty's fleet could not.

The ear of a bastion run out at the main dock-head, the walls of the old churchyard above the river earthworked and buttressed, bristling with eighteen-pounders, and the merchants themselves, commanded by the Mayor, reviewed in Price's Square by the Earl of Scarborough. Four companies of scarlet-breeched merchants, lapelled and faced with blue and green and buff, forming platoon and firing their muskets.

In the fields on Everton Hill the soldiers stood by the pitch-barrels and turpentine, ready to fire the signal beacon when the French were sighted. All Liverpool was in confusion.

But Monsieur Thurot was waylaid by British frigates on 21st February and died of his wounds on the deck of the Marshal Belleisle, and the Liverpool merchants returned to rueful contemplation of their trade returns.

Times were bad. Insurance to Jamaica risen to twelve guineas per cent., 143 Liverpool ships lost in four years—one-third of them slave ships—the whole Carolina indigo crop of '57 taken by the French; French privateers everywhere.

The Merchants' Coffee House, the Cross Keys and Pontack's deserted, the linkmen awaiting their masters, grumbling at bad times and the passing trollops they could not afford. "The French will soon be after you," they called.

The merchants sat in their offices again, but the volunteer companies were not disbanded. The uniforms had been costly and were very handsome.

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On 25th October, in Kensington Palace, His Majesty had risen at 6 o'clock and drunk his cup of chocolate. The attendants had withdrawn, they stood in the next room awaiting their summons. They heard a fall and a groan and found the old king dead.

Liverpool could not deplore the death of King George II but it celebrated the coronation of George III with spirit. The young king had asserted that, "born and educated in this country, he gloried in the name of Briton," and such a sentiment from a Hanoverian could not but win approbation. The prospect, too, seemed brighter. The French were finally driven out of India, Mr. Clive had returned to England and an Irish peerage, and well deserved the fine medal struck to commemorate his victory at Plassey. Victory appropriately borne upon an elephant, and Mr. Clive in a toga and Rex Parthis manner handing a sceptre to a grateful Indian. Quebec had fallen. Canada was in British hands. The war would soon be over. But it was three years before the negotiations for peace began. Three years which the Liverpool merchants felt to have been advantageously employed. For Admiral Rodney and General Monckton had established British supremacy in the West Indies: Guadaloupe, Martinique, Grenada, St. Lucia and St. Vincent. The whole of the Caribbees. More sugar, more rum, more slaves. Excellent. But, to their chagrin, by the Treaty of Paris, Guadaloupe, St. Lucia and Martinique were relinquished. The future looked less golden until it was computed that the new acquisitions—Tobago, Grenada, St. Vincent and Dominica would bring fortune enough to Liverpool when adequately furnished with slave labour.

"A peace honourable to the Crown and beneficial to the people," declaimed the King, undeterred by a national

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debt of 132 million pounds, and the Liverpool merchants concurred.

After all, the merchants reflected, though losses had been considerable they still had the wherewithal to fit out new slave ships. The naval convoys had saved many slaves from the French, though not until the Lords of the Admiralty had taken measures against their laxity by assuring the merchants that, if any commanders of men-of-war had been defective in their duty of convoying or protecting their ships, or pursuing privateers, on notice being given, they should be dealt with according to their deserts. Liverpool had eighty-three ships trading to Guinea. But in peace time, too, an owner had his worries. They were the regrettable losses of slaves and seamen off the coast and during the Middle Passage. It was unfortunate that the climate should be so insalubrious. There was that report from Old Calabar they had discussed at Pontack's. "The river of late has been very fatal both to whites and blacks. There have three captains belonging to Bristol died within these few months, besides a number of officers and sailors. I assure you I never saw a worse prospect in my life for making a voyage than at present. The major part of the vessels here have very dangerous disorders among the slaves, which makes me rejoice that I have very few on board."

A white-livered fellow, no doubt. No trade without its risks. But such losses were covered by the Providence which blessed their enterprise. For, should mortality be high among the slaves, the West Indian planters paid better prices. Seventy, eighty, a hundred pounds. One slave, say, for £25 of trade goods. Well, that was of course at honest retail prices. Goods worth £10 or £12. The cost of trade goods? Easier to look up the return of last voyage. Four boys sold at £35, one at £40. Two



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hundred and thirty men and women at £7,820. Five more lots for £1,052 and two sickly ones for £30. That made £9,082. 0. 0.

To cash paid Import Duty on 268 Slaves  
at 10/- and Bond 5/- £134. 5s. od.

To ditto paid the Dr. his head money  
on ditto at 12/- 13. 8s. od.

To ditto paid Captain Trader, his coast  
commission at £4 per 104 on £9,082  
gross sales 349. 6s. 2d.

To my commission at 5 per cent. on the  
gross sales 454. 2s. od.

And there was still over £8,000. Less the trade goods and victualling, of course. Prices would go on rising and Liverpool imported seven-eighths of the negroes of the whole European trade. It was heartening as Jamaica rum.

During the war the press-gang had been the bane of the Captains. The owners told them that, should they fall in with a man-of-war, respectfully to represent the injury the owners would sustain should their people be impressed. It was always advisable to try and obtain Admiralty letters as a protection. But the losses had been severe, especially in the West Indian ports. Captains unable to sail, or sailing undermanned, an easy prey to the French privateers. Not only on the high seas was the press-gang active. Naval vessels would lie in wait for the returning ships, so that the seamen would frequently leave their ships at the Black Rock with the ship's boats and land in Cheshire, and a crew of carpenters and dock hands would have to be sent to berth the merchantman. Had not the press-gang from H.M.S. Vengeance taken a whole crew returning from the West Indies, flogged them for resistance and carried them off on a three-year

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cruise, tied to the ship's gratings? War, too, had deprived the owners of many good captains. That was the worst loss. Some, however, had only been taken prisoner and would now return. There was Captain Creevy already back again. He had had the misfortune to have been twice taken in a twelvemonth. From the French flagship *Fortune*; he had written to his owners that he had been well treated, and ended, Godfearing man that he was: "I hope in God's good time He will return me to the British shore, there to partake of those inestimable blessings of liberty and religion." Yes, indeed England was blessed by liberty. A free country.

Ah, the *Chronicle*. Thank you, James. Five slaves to be auctioned at the Customs House. Some left-overs, probably, from the *Thomas*. But twelve pipes of raisin wine were up, too. They might go cheap. A stroll would be pleasant.

The ships loading and discharging on the quay. A crowd already gathering round the Customs House steps. The Customs House might have been larger, more imposing, the merchants thought, but in 1700 trade had not been so flourishing. The royal arms, however, lent it a certain dignity.

Mr. Parker, the auctioneer, had come out of the arcade. He wore a bob wig and swung the skirts of his snuff-coloured coat. His man was arranging the goods—the raisin wine, two boxes of bottled cider, six sacks of flour. Two stout men in sober grey and brown coats pushed through the lounging seamen and mounted the steps to examine the merchandise. They exchanged greetings with Mr. Parker. The man set a wooden chair above the steps. A clock began to strike and the city clock counter-pointed its four chimes. Mr. Parker climbed on to the chair, incongruous dais for his solemnity.

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The wine, the cider, the flour. Mr. Parker persuasive, urgent, extolling his wares. The crowd fraying. Passers-by loitering, attracted by the stentorian voice above shouts of loading, rattle of pulleys, mewing of seagulls. A smell of unwashed humanity, tar and seaweed. Mr. Parker's man crosses the corner of the Old Dock and goes into a wooden shed. He reappears with a negro and leads him up the steps. The crowd knots again. The negro wears shirt and trousers of dirty white cotton, round his neck an iron collar bolted to a chair which the auctioneer's man drops with a rattle. Apathetic eyes above grey brand-mark, thin drooping shoulders, bare feet pink-edged as if the colour had worn away. The man says something and the negro shakes his head, rolls uncomprehending eyes. The man repeats his order and pulls at the dirty white shirt. Slowly the black hands unbutton it. The servant lifts the chain and tugs at the shirt. The crowd titters at black hands waving helplessly.

"Gentlemen . . . a fine healthy negro brought back from Bonny by Mr. Roberts."

The negro shivers in the nip of March wind. The two citizens in grey and brown go up and prod his ribs.

"A scarecrow."

"A bag-of-bones."

Their red faces are beaming and jovial.

"Five pounds did you say? Five pounds?"

Mr. Parker pained and incredulous.

"The gentleman offers me FIVE POUNDS for a fine healthy, well-set-up negro! A young man, mark you," he apostrophizes the crowd.

A lean man in a bag-wig bids £6.

"Open your mouth, my good fellow," says the man in grey. The negro shakes his head, shivering miserably.

The auctioneer's man seizes the negro's upper and

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lower jaws and pulls them apart. The grey coat bends and stretches its seams.

"Seems healthy . . . with a bit of feeding. Give you £10 for him."

The servant lets go of the negro's mouth.

Eleven, twelve, thirteen, and the slave is knocked down to the worthy burgher for £14.

Two more negroes are brought. One leans on the other. He can barely walk. His ankle is raw, suppurating. The crowd find him a comic fellow. He fetches a poor price.

Interest reviving as a young negress is pushed forward. She has the quality of a statue uncouthly dressed. With the assurance of youth and health she confronts the crowd of bleached faces with vague confidence in her destiny.

A cluster of seamen start bawdy joking among themselves, and a shopkeeper with his young wife on his arm draws away in disfavour. The woman watches the negress. She has passed through streets where slave collars, branding-irons, thumb-screws and mouth-openers are displayed for sale. She knows their use, but they are so remote from her experience that their significance has hitherto remained unreal. She cannot apply them to the human life to which she belongs. She typifies the incurious not unkindly majority of her race. Slavery existed, unpleasant, sometimes cruel. It was more comfortable not to know, to speculate, as in eating meat it was useless to dwell on the slaughter-house. It was one of the regrettable necessities of life. But the slave girl raises fleeting doubt, compassion. She must be homesick, lonely. But speculation gives place to the comforting assurance that blacks, like animals, soon acclimatised themselves, that it is pure fantasy to endow them with human sensibility. . . . But she would like to have her as maidservant and treat her well—teach her Christian

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virtues and good housewifery. "If you buy her," she tells her husband, "we should save on wages." And the husband, who is prospering, thinks her a strong, likely serving wench and is not averse to the idea of raising a slave like any gentleman planter or merchant. The girl would have a good home. It was almost charity. In the benevolence induced by well-doing he buys her for £12.

The making of a merchant: the small shop, the larger one; the slave-ship share and a profit unequalled by years of hard work; a half share, and the orbit of life widening; a comfortable residence with counting-house, servants and clerks; purchase of a Guineaman, and the metamorphosis complete.

Liverpool's prosperity grew apace in the years preceding the American War of 1775.

In 1760 the first stage-coach to London was advertised. Liverpool citizens established relations with London in a two days' journey for fifty shillings. The following year the chilloes and chintzes of Manchester came by the Duke of Bridgewater's new canal to be loaded for Africa instead of by cart and waggon over the heavy unpaved roads. There was even time to build an observatory, and to found an Academy of Arts. In April, 1768, when the new Parliament was convoked, Liverpool returned two Members as befitted her status. The merchant Mr. John Tarleton was also proposed but a demonstration against him, reinforced by brandished blubber knives from the Liverpool whalers, effectually quelled his supporters.

The dockyards bristled with the ribs of new ships, ships for the African trade. In 1773 the *Kent*, of 1100 tons, slid into the Mersey—the largest ship which had yet been built in the North of England; and by the last decade of the century Liverpool counted 132 ships trading annually to Africa.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LIVERPOOL MERCHANTS

**I**N 1804, when the abolition of the slave trade could no longer be dismissed as the dream of a few fanatics, the Liverpool merchants addressed a petition to the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of Great Britain in Parliament assembled.

The document was an imposing one: nineteen huge parchment pages of signatures appended to the text, tied with black silk ribbon, adorned with three red-sealed rosettes. It most humbly showed: "That your petitioners, observing that a Bill is now depending in Parliament for a total abolition of the African Slave Trade, . . . beg leave to express, with the greatest respect, that many of your petitioners, having, under the protection of the Legislature embarked a considerable part of their property in that Trade, will be very materially injured if the said Bill should pass into a Law. . . ."

Below the petition the list of merchants is headed by the signatures of Thomas Leyland, the Tarleton, Aspinall and Earle brothers.

It was small wonder they headed such a petition, for they had gained wealth and prominence, and the most considerable part of their property, solely through the triangular trade in slaves and West Indian produce.

The decade after the Peace of Paris saw the beginning of these fortunes. William and Thomas Earle, the sons

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of John Earle, merchant, and once Mayor of Liverpool, were building up a thriving business in slaves which they found more profitable, if a greater risk, than the Mediterranean trading of their forebears.

William Earle, unlike most merchants of his day, had his offices in Redcross Street, while he himself lived at West Derby, near Larkhill, in a house called The Brick House. During the Seven Years' War, he writes in his letter book that his luck had been very bad, since he had lost two of his biggest ships to the French in one year. This may have prompted him to write, with other merchants, to *Williamson's Advertiser*, protesting at the continued publication of the merchantmen's sailing list of the ships entering and leaving port, "having too much reason to believe that it has been of very bad consequence to them this war."

Despite the war, however, he continued his trade in slaves and in 1761 he notes with satisfaction that a cargo of 380 slaves had all sold in Maryland at £20 each.

Again, he writes: "The Calypso, with Captain Cope-land [his brother-in-law], has arrived on the coast, after beating off a privateer of fourteen guns in a very gallant manner."

The *Liverpool Advertiser* of 1770 contains many notices of Messrs. William Earle and Company's cargoes. "The Mars . . . 86 hogheads of sugar, 140 bags of cotton, 140 bags of ginger, 5 tons of log-wood, 13 elephants' teeth &c., from Jamaica."

In 1796, he was also well-known and esteemed by the negro chief of Old Town, Calabar—Grandy King George. "Give my complements to the gentlemen owners of the brigg Swift. . . and as allso Mr. Erll," he writes in a letter to Captain Ambrose Lace.

It was said of the Earle brothers that to them was con-

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signed "everything arriving from the coasts of the Mediterranean, from the Pillars of Hercules to the Pillars of Pompey", and to whom "every foreigner, if he could not speak English, had a letter of introduction."

The Tarletons were another old Liverpool merchant family. During the war they had taken out Letters of Marque and successfully combined trading with privateering. Their brig, the *Jenny*, Captain Brown, on her way to the Leeward Islands seized the French merchantman *Legère* which was on her way to Bordeaux from St. Domingo, and Messrs. Tarleton announced the sale of her cargo of sugar, coffee and indigo "by the candle", at the Bath Coffee House.

Tarleton's ship, the *Catherine*, Captain Augustus Gwyn, was less fortunate. A French privateer attacked her, and in Captain Gwyn's words, "fought us three glasses, but my people behaved gallantly and beat them off. They made attempts to board; we raked them with our stern chase, which made them glad to sheer off. In this engagement none of our people were hurt, but almost every rope was shot away, and our sails and so on greatly damaged."

But Captain Gwyn revenged himself and captured a French privateer of eight guns off Antigua, and a Dutch sloop with a cargo of French sugar, and retook the English *True-love* and *Jane* from Captain Thurot.

John Tarleton prospered. He had a fine house in Water Street, and decided that his son Banastre should not be educated in the counting-house. He sent him to Oxford and from there to the Temple. But Banastre Tarleton attained celebrity in the Army and not in the Law, and was destined to become the most ardent defender of Liverpool's interest in the slave trade.

In 1761 William Aspinall is described as a sailmaker



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of 81, Duke Street. But like so many men of Liverpool his fortunes rose with the fortunes of the city, and soon his address is 57, Bold Street, and his designation, 'merchant', although other members of the Aspinall family still plied the trades of sailmakers, glaziers and plumbers.

William Aspinall was a shrewd business man. He knew what he wanted and he applied his shrewdness, his big heavy body, and his quick temper to getting it. He prospered despite the war and despite the losses he incurred from the unscrupulous among his captains, who kept his ships out for many months over the time scheduled for their voyages, engaged in trading on their own account. But it was to a Liverpool captain that Mr. Aspinall owed much of his prosperity and no little of his fame. Captain Hugh Crow served him well from 1798, till he brought back his ship the *Mary* on 2nd May, 1807, the day after the Bill for the Abolition had been passed.

William Aspinall, looking for a likely man to captain his *Guineaman*, the *Will*, bound for Bonny on the Benin Bight. She was a three-hundred ton ship carrying eighteen six-pounders, the man who commanded her must be worthy of a fine vessel. There was Crow, the mate of the *James*. He was a man well thought of by owners and underwriters, and had been trading to Guinea since 1790. Mr. Aspinall forthwith interviewed the Manxman, who appeared capable and frank. The young man had lost his right eye, he told Aspinall, as the result of an accident when he was still a boy. He had been captured by the French in 1794, when chief mate of the *Gregson* and had escaped after twelve months' imprisonment; he had newly returned from Bonny. Aspinall liked him and engaged him forthwith. He took his new captain to Beat's Hotel and ordered a pint of wine. Hugh

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Crow drank his wine and prepared himself to memorise the lengthy instructions of his owner. But all William Aspinall said was: "Crow, mind your eye! You will find many ships at Bonny!"

In the days when William Aspinall, the Tarletons and the Earles were establishing themselves as merchants of Liverpool, Thomas Leyland was a small boy. He left the West Riding of Yorkshire about 1770 to become a clerk in Liverpool, where fortunes were being made, where fresh ventures prospered and grew with a magic swiftness. Thomas Leyland would not remain a clerk, would not spend long years in slow promotion from one stool to another. He borrowed £500 from his friends and started a cautious trade in meats and bacon from Ireland. He was a merchant, small but solvent.

In 1776 he subscribed, with thousands of hopeful Britons, to the Government lottery loan. "Someone must win it, why not I?"

Thomas Leyland won £20,000 worth of stock and married his former employer's daughter. He engaged forthwith in the slave trade on a large scale. He became a citizen of importance and a very rich man. By 1802 his African trading was so firmly established as to give insufficient vent to his enterprise and he became partner in the bank of Clarke and Roscoe. But William Roscoe was declared bankrupt in 1806 and Thomas Leyland, started his own bank in King Street. Thomas Leyland, insignificant Yorkshire clerk, became Thomas Leyland banker, millionaire and three times Mayor of Liverpool.

It is strange that Leyland should have linked his fortunes with those of William Roscoe, one of the few determined antagonists of the slave trade in Liverpool.

In the dirty, narrow-streeted city with its great docks

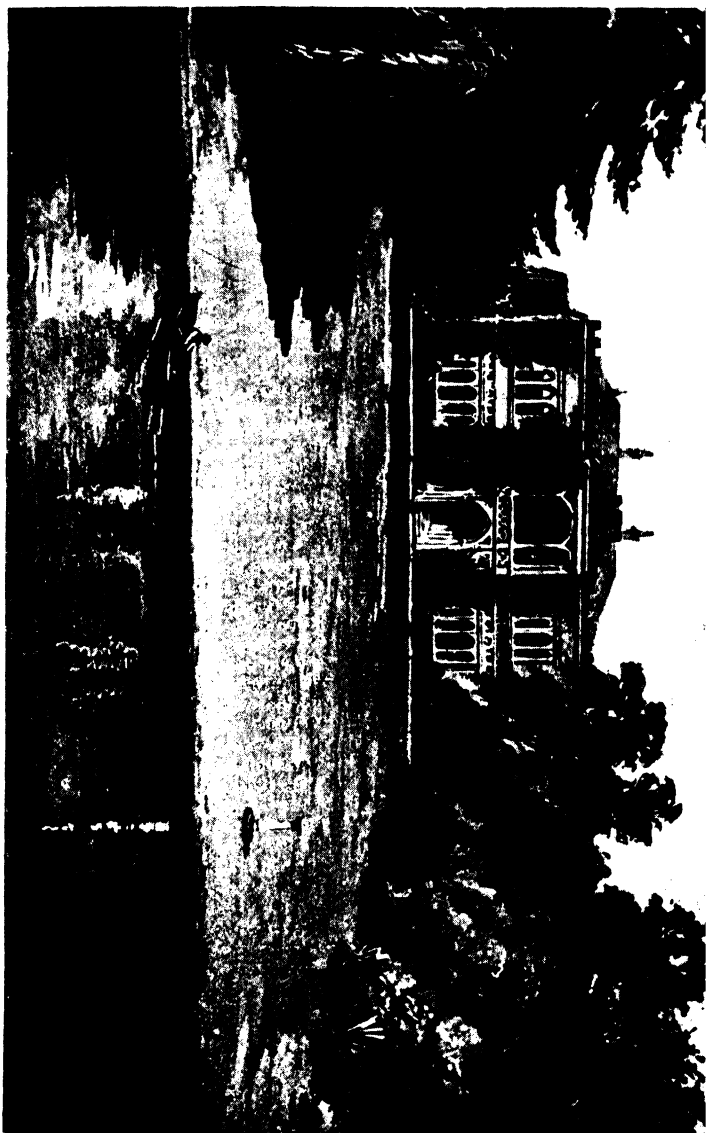
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and wharves, where Bills of Exchange, slaves and sugar were the common change of conversation, William Roscoe, the market-gardener's son, lived his life as attorney and banker to the slave dealers, while upon its darkness and crudity he superimposed the sunlit brilliance, the grace and wit of mediaeval Italy. As a boy he had longed to study. "... Being now in my fifteenth year," he wrote, "I was called upon to make choice of a profession, when my attachment to reading induced me to prefer that of a bookseller. I was accordingly placed with Mr. Gore, a respectable tradesman in Liverpool; but having remained there for a month, and not finding the attendance on a shop reconcilable to my disposition, I quitted him and returned to my labours."

William Roscoe wrote the life of Lorenzo de Medici, and in the great Florentine's ambient, in the recognition he earned from Italy and France, drew consolation and strength to confront the antagonism of the slave traders and his own financial difficulties. But he had a nearer refuge than fifteenth-century Italy. In an old red-brick house on the hill, three miles from the city, he could talk of philosophy, of politics, of literature with his friend William Rathbone.

William Rathbone was the only prominent merchant in Liverpool not engaged or connected with the slave trade.

The Rathbones had settled in Liverpool about 1730, and in 1750 William Rathbone's grandfather had become a well-to-do timber merchant and shipowner. His ships took cargoes of salt to Scandinavia and returned with timber for the Rathbone saw-mills. Late in life he and his father became Quakers. William Rathbone's father inherited the now prosperous business and he and his son openly expressed their abhorrence of the slave trade. No timber from the Rathbone yards ever went into



GREENBANK, WAVERTREE  
The seat of William Rathbone



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a Guineaman. "He possessed a fine understanding with a solid judgment. . . . Courage to dare to do that which was right, however it might resist the Customs or the prejudices of man," wrote Clarkson, the Abolitionist. Indeed it needed great courage and integrity to oppose the slave trade in Liverpool. But the two William Rathbones, father and son, had that courage and they were among the first eighteen members of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade in Liverpool.

The Rathbones supplied the Society with copies of the muster rolls of slave ships from the Liverpool Customs House; their name appeared boldly in the anti-slavery protests. In thus opposing the vested interests of Liverpool, they risked not only social ostracism but financial loss.

William Rathbone himself recounts how, when he summoned a Liverpool doctor, the cautious practitioner asked leave to pay his visits after dark since, were his carriage seen and recognised standing outside Greenbank, his practice would most assuredly suffer.

The William Rathbone who was Roscoe's friend left school while still very young, to work in the Rathbone offices. But he devoted his spare time to learning French, Greek and Latin and was a zealous student of political economy. At the quiet old house on the hill he collected round him a few intimate friends of his own calibre.

Each century breeds a few men who anticipate a future generation. Born out of time, they have courage to work for the society of the future and, in the fulfilling of their purpose, ignore ridicule and fight obstruction. Posterity pays them their tribute. Such men were William Roscoe, William Rathbone, Dr. Binns, Dr. Currie and Edward Rushton. They opposed slavery, and later they opposed the wars against Napoleon, and the Liverpool merchants

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regarded them first with amused scorn and later, when their determination of purpose was proved, as dangerous, misguided men.

But many of the merchants who dealt in slaves were recognised by William Rathbone and his friends as honest men with many fine qualities and it was, paradoxically, the more difficult for them to convince such men of the immorality of the trade in human beings.

Were they not, they contended, when forced to consider the question, conferring the benefits of European civilisation upon the blacks? Were they not saving the wretched negroes from death and torture at the hands of their native rulers?

Specious arguments, eminently satisfying to their conscience; and they applied themselves industriously to promoting the trade to the glory of Liverpool and the wealth of the nation.

The slave trade needed capital. The triangular voyage from Liverpool to Guinea, the West Indies and back to Liverpool took a year or longer. The outlay was considerable, the profit slow in return. Often the ships were delayed by storm or calm. The capability of the slave agents and the compliance of the African kings were subject to the common mutability of human enterprise. At times the captains would be unable to collect a full complement of slaves at one port, and subsequent delay was costly in pay and victualling.

The ships had to be stout and well-built, usually full-rigged, from 150 to 400 tons burthen and armed with fourteen to twenty guns. There were, too, the lighter brigs and snows, but all were well-armed, not only against enemy privateers and naval men-of-war, but against pirates, slave mutinies and the recalcitrance of uncompromising chiefs.

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The cargo of trade goods cost a considerable sum although the goods were of cheap quality. The negroes were not so easily satisfied as they had been formerly with coloured beads, mirrors and Manchester cottons. They had learned the superior value of firearms and the test of a musket was its efficiency and not its appearance. The natives had complained, said the captains, that they found the butts of the trade guns of more use than the muzzles. Gunpowder, flints and brandy were also in demand. Copper and iron bars, common currency of the African littoral from Cape Verde to the Congo, cost fifteen pence apiece. The native chiefs of established worth as slave sellers, whose power was sufficiently wide to supply the market, were shrewd men and drove keen bargains with the white men who, they soon realised, were determined to fill their ships at all costs. But if they were shrewd they were also capricious and the captains were obliged to carry a great variety of goods. For if the king of Bonny or Accra had, last voyage, been pleased to sell his countrymen for iron bars and pieces of blue cotton baft, it was learned by sad experience that the following year he might categorically refuse to barter unless he received brandy, gold-laced hats and cutlasses. Demands varied with necessity. Needs grew with growing sophistication.

One piece of chintz, eighteen yards long; one piece of baft, eighteen yards long; one piece of chilloe, eighteen yards long; one piece of bandanoe, seven handkerchiefs; one piece of neccannee, fourteen yards long; one piece of photae, fourteen yards long; one piece of cashtoo, fourteen yards long; three pieces of ramatts, forty-five handkerchiefs; one large brass pan, two muskets; twenty-five kegs of powder, one hundred flints; two bags of shot, twenty-five knives; four iron pots, four hats, four caps,



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four cutlasses, six hundred bunches of beads; fourteen gallons of brandy. The Bonny chieftain and his household well provided, finely adorned, all for the price of one miscreant subject. If no miscreants were available, a raid on the neighbouring state would usually provide enough captives to indemnify possible reprisals.

The kings made the Europeans pay "coomey" for the privilege of trading. Each chief had his own elaborate scale of import and export dues. The captains usually found it politic to pay. Default or intimidation was dangerous and detrimental to trade. The irregular traders were less scrupulous in observance. Why should they pay for negroes who could be obtained free, for nothing more than some forethought and rum? They would invite unsuspecting negro traders to come aboard for a glass of rum. Rum they gave them in plenty and liquor-evoked songs and hilarity would drown the rattle of the anchor winches. Waking from heavy sleep, the negroes would find themselves well out to sea, bound for the West Indies.

"The trade consists in negroes, elephants' teeth and other commodities," wrote Captain Snelgrave in 1734, "which the natives freely bring on board our ships except when any affront has been offered them; which to the great scandal both of French and English, has too often been done, namely by their forcibly carrying away the Traders under some slight pretence of having received an injury from them. And this has put a stop to the trade of the particular place where it has happened for a long time; and innocent People, who have come there to trade in small vessels, have suffered for their countrymen's villainy."

Another easy and profitable method of combining business and pleasure, was to take a native mistress to the Caribbees and sell her there.

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At Whydah, a slave for six anchors of brandy. The white man's drink was more potent and enlivening than palm-toddy. The negro chiefs bought it eagerly, for not only was it grateful to their palates and their spirits, but with brandy their followers were inspired to greater deeds of daring, more ruthless pillage, more determined pursuit of fugitives. Brandy brought them more slaves. Although the white men were to be warily approached, they were worth encouragement, protection, and immunity for their factories as long as they traded fairly and paid promptly.

The first headquarters of the Royal African Company had been established at Cape Corse (Cape Coast), and factories were built at Anamboe, Savi, the capital of Whydah, and Jaqueen towards the end of the seventeenth century, when England had begun to rival the Dutch and Brandenburg traders.

"Cape Corse Castle is the Metropolitan Place of the British Royal African Company upon the coast of Africa and the residence of their General and Council: It is a strong fortification, consisting of Four Bastions, two to the Land and two to the Sea; with a large platform to the seaward which commands the road, on all which are mounted Forty-eight pieces of Cannon. This Fort can protect the shipping in the road from an Enemy, which the *Dutch Castle* at Elmina cannot do, by reason there is not depth of water for the ships to go so near to the Castle, as to lie under the cover of their guns.

"Within the Castle are many large spacious convenient rooms, both for walking, eating and sleeping; besides several large storehouses, and houses for their slaves. At a little distance from it is a very fine and large garden, abounding with all manner of fruits that the country produces, as China and Seville oranges, lemons, citrons,

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pomegranates, cocoa-nuts, tamarinds, pine-apples, grapes, limes, guavos, and the casava tree, all planted between the hills in exact order in walks, containing an extent of about twenty acres of ground; besides, there is plenty of plantanes and Bannanoes, and several other fruits. There are all sorts of greens, as cabbages and lettuces of several sorts, and other esculents."

The African chiefs were not always amenable to the projected factories. Their mistrust of the white man and his firearms was not quite outweighed by the benefits of trade he conferred upon them. King Naimbana of Robana expressed his preference for Englishmen to other Europeans since he believed them to be the most honest, but he qualified his approval by adding that he considered "every white man to be a rogue." In Ardra and Whydah the kings would not allow factories to be built on the shore. The most they would concede was permission to construct frail mud and bamboo forts three miles inland. But their opposition and mistrust of the unknown was gradually and carefully overcome. Factors, agents and supercargoes who were "too hasty and passionate" were dismissed. The reasons were not humanitarian ones. The negroes refused to trade. Gradually factories and trading stations sprang up along the coast. The factors lived in comfort and spread European civilisation from the security of thick walls adorned with cannon. In 1784 Alexander Anderson and his brother built a factory on Bance Island where they bought slaves, camwood and ivory. In February, 1791, Anna Maria Falconbridge, whose husband, Alexander, was to take charge of the colony of freed slaves, founded by Abolitionist zeal in 1790 at Sierra Leone, was entertained there.

"This building, at a distance has a respectable and formidable appearance," she wrote in a long letter to a

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friend, "Nor is it much less so on nearer investigation: I suppose it is about one hundred feet in length, and thirty in breadth, and contains nine rooms on one floor, under which are commodious large cellars and store-rooms; to the right is the kitchen, forge, etc: and to the left other necessary buildings, all of country stone, and surrounded with a prodigious thick lofty wall.

"There was formerly a fortification in front of those houses, which was destroyed by a French frigate during the last war; at present several pieces of cannon are planted in the same place, but without embrasures or breastwork; behind the great house is the slave yard, and houses for accommodating the slaves.

"Delicacy, perhaps, prevented the gentlemen from taking me to see them; but the room where we dined looks directly into the yard.

"Involuntarily I strolled to one of the windows a little before dinner, without the smallest suspicion of what I was to see: judge then, what was my astonishment and feelings, at the sight of between two and three hundred wretched victims, chained and parcelled out in circles, just satisfying the cravings of nature behind a trough of rice placed in the centre of each circle.

"Offended modesty rebuked me with a blush for not hurrying my eyes from such disgusting scenes; but whether fascinated by female curiosity, or whatever else, I could not withdraw myself for several minutes—while I remarked some whose hair was withered with age, reluctantly tasting their food—and others thoughtless from youth, greedily devouring all before them; be assured I avoided the prospects from this side of the house ever after."

Nevertheless, despite the African kings' good-will towards the European traders, the poor native, who had seen them "come in flying-houses to take away poor black

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prisoners . . . to kill them with hunger and filth in the cellars of their flying-houses . . .” who, since the white man’s advent, had cause to fear unjust imprisonment should saleable captives be too few to satisfy the traders’ demands and the chiefs’ cupidity, the common man, whose rulers and medicine men, even his own relatives, he could no longer trust to protect him, never lost his primitive animal caution. If he coveted the gaudy handkerchiefs, the cotton checks of the wealthy, he traded circumspectly and with due precaution. Where none hindered him he refused to allow the Europeans to land. He would make a smoke-fire on the beach to attract the “swimming house” and then put off in his canoe to barter his produce at the ship’s side. He was not powerful or rich enough to offer slaves—unless, indeed, there was some intractable relation to dispose of, with the family’s consent—but the white men bought ivory from him and plumage, and sometimes carvings to amuse and horrify their families at home. They constantly needed fresh produce to supplement their diet of biscuit and salt meat: fish, fowls, melons, pumpkins and plaintains and such vegetables as their unadventurous palates approved.

Thus the captains sold their employers’ goods and bought therewith a fresh and more profitable cargo. But profits could not be assured till the risks and hazards of the Middle Passage between Guinea and the West Indies were behind them. Slaves were valuable merchandise and sold readily, but one profitable voyage might well have to compensate for two or three disastrous ones. Mortality was often high, slaves and seamen ravaged by fever or dysentery. In the dirty, over-crowded ships epidemics were impossible to check, and on his arrival in the West Indies a captain might find his cargo depleted by twenty, thirty, forty, even fifty per cent.

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“This is to certify you of my arrivall here haveing seven weeks Passage from Bony,” wrote the captain of the Bristol ship *Greyhound* to his employers from Barbadoes in 1723, “but very Dismall and Mortall, for out of 339 Slaves I brought in here but 214, for ye like Mortality Never was known for Jolly Likely men slaves to Get their Diett overnight, ye next Morning Dead, 2 or 3 in a Night. . . .”

In 1769 conditions had not improved. An announcement, a brief epitaph of indescribable horror and suffering, appeared in a Liverpool newspaper on 16th June. “The John, Captain Erskine, from Bonny, at Barbadoes, with two hundred and odd slaves, buried 247, and gone to St. Dominica.”

There was the danger, too, of slave mutinies and so the slaves were manacled two and two, and kept chained on deck and below hatches; and there was always wind and weather and enemy ships.

Since the time of Charles II the English slave merchants had employed their own factors in the West Indies. By the *Asiento* between Queen Anne and Philip V of Spain, England guaranteed to import 144,000 negroes in thirty years. Factories had become a necessity, and Philip V readily granted privilege of establishment.

The captains of prosperous merchants delivered their slaves at the employers' depots where they were subsequently sold. But the factors were particular, they would accept only strong, healthy negroes. The captains were shrewd buyers but home-sickness, sea-sickness, epidemic and disease decimated their cargoes. They seemed unable to realise that, did they but provide adequate air and space, the percentage of deaths and incapacitation would be minimised, the slaves fetch better prices. They were blinded by the glitter of their profits and continued to

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load three slaves to a ton; to store the negroes between decks where they were unable to stand upright, to pack them so tightly that they were frequently forced to lie on their sides, and a foot was unable to find floor space between them, and to leave the dead shackled to the living in the hope of bringing a few extra alive to the market. Of a Liverpool slaver at Bonny, Falconbridge wrote: "By purchasing so great a number, the slaves were so crowded that they were even obliged to lie one upon another. This occasioned such mortality among them that . . . nearly one half of them died before the ship arrived in the West Indies. The place allotted to the sick negroes is under the half-deck, where they lie on the bare plank. By this means, those who are emaciated frequently have their skin, and even their flesh, entirely rubbed off, by the motion of the ship, from the prominent parts of the shoulders, elbows and hips. . . . Few indeed are able to withstand the fatal effects of their sufferings."

The captains were adepts at preparing their slaves for market. Like unscrupulous horse-copers they considered legitimate all and every method which would render their wares saleable.

The slaves rejected by the factors were sold in open auction or by *vendue* at the taverns. They were bought chiefly by Jews and surgeons for a few dollars each. They used "lunar caustic" (silver nitrate) to give temporary relief to the negroes afflicted with yaws, and one captain boasted that he had prevented Jewish buyers from detecting the signs of dysentery in the sick slaves he put up for auction, by the use of oakum wads.

The cast-out negroes, the sick and ill were disposed of to ambulant slave-hawkers, purchasers who were called "soul-drivers" and, who with their chained merchandise, went the round of the plantations. It was sometimes

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advantageous to sell a mediocre lot of slaves by "scramble," at a flat rate of about £28 a head. The captain would have the decks darkened by tarpaulins, the slaves brought up—the women to the quarter-deck, the men to the fore-deck—and those who wished to purchase were given tallies. A gun was fired: the buyers rushed across the gang planks and, in the half-darkness, bound proprietary handkerchiefs round the arms of the stoutest-looking figures. The negroes, totally unprepared and uncomprehending, would yell with fear and often sought escape from what they could only interpret as violent intention, by jumping overboard.

If the market of one port were glutted, the captains sailed up and down the islands till they had disposed of the miserable dregs of their cargo.

But the merchants in Liverpool saw nothing of these activities. It was not their business and they were uninterested in detail of commerce. That was the captains' business. The filth, the agony, the degradation transformed into gratifying symmetrical rows of figures on clean white paper. Negroes were naked and black, they spoke an unintelligible tongue. Had the merchants read Hume's Essay on National Character, they would doubtless have found his opinion a sensible and sound one.

"I am apt to suspect," he wrote, "the negroes, and in general all the other species of men, (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There *never was* a civilised nation of any other complexion than white, *nor even any individual* eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures among them, no arts, no sciences. There are negro slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which *none* ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity."

The merchants awaited the return of their ships laden



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with rum, sugar and coffee, with pleasurable anticipation.

During the wars with France there was considerable risk of capture, for the French privateers and men-of-war were particularly active off the West Indian coasts. Although their slaving ships frequently sailed under convoy, there was long-standing enmity between the merchant captains and the Navy. Their best seamen were often impressed by British press gangs in the West Indian ports or summarily carried off on the high seas. The Liverpool captain, Hugh Crow, gives an account in his memoirs of the impressment of his "people" at Port Royal. They took from him every man and boy they could find. "The impressment of seamen," he wrote indignantly, "I have always considered to be, in many points of view, much more arbitrary and cruel than what was termed the slave trade. Our great statesmen, however, are regardless of such evils at home, and direct their exclusive attention to supposed evils abroad."

Indeed, the merchantmen insufficiently or inefficiently manned, suffered great inconvenience and sometimes disaster. The merchants, however, did not submit to such treatment without protest. They fought His Majesty's Navy in the Law Courts. In 1759 Mr. Nickleson, a merchant of Poole, sued Captain Fortesque of the man-of-war Prince Edward for £1,000 damages and costs for impressing men of his ship the Thomas and Elizabeth "in consequence of which the said ship was lost." He won his case.

Captain Crow, with eclectic application of principle which, albeit an undoubtedly persistent human failing, is so astonishingly characteristic of the eighteenth-century attitude towards social abuse, failed to draw any parallel between prevalent methods of inducing sailors to engage

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in the slavers. The Guinea trade was unpopular though not for any moral scruples. The men who haunted the dock-side taverns were often escaped jail-birds, criminals evading detention, or "gentlemen's sons of desperate character and abandoned habits." But mortality among the sailors was high and the discomfort of life in the tropics was a deterrent. In the British ports there were many inn-keepers who found co-operation with the slave captains profitable. It was easy to induce men to drink themselves so heavily into debt that they accepted service in a Guinea-man as the only alternative to imprisonment.

The merchants who dealt in human beings were of the same mentality as Captain Crow. To them such men as Rathbone and Roscoe were enigmas. Business men and prosperous, the slave traders felt them to be victims of a morbid and foolish fanaticism and their opinions were utterly discounted, until, in 1772, Lord Mansfield passed judgment on the case of the slave Somersett and uncomfortably stirred the national conscience.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MANSFIELD JUDGMENT

LONDON in 1772. There were the routs at Ranelagh and Soho Square; the full-skirted ladies who nodded tall wigs over chocolate and the excesses of Crewe House, the new economy at court, and Mr. Garrick's acting. The silk-coated gentlemen with their smart yellow-wheeled chaises, the card-debts at Brooks's and their admiration for Mrs. Siddons. Sir Joshua Reynolds painted the lovely ladies, and young Rowlandson was soon to caricature the gentlemen. Dr. Johnson sat in the Mitre, nibbled orange-peel and answered Boswell's interminable questions. Society was complacent.

It was modish for ladies and gentlemen of fashion to keep negro slaves. The ladies preferred small, plump-faced boys whom they dressed exotically and treated as pets. They bought silver padlocks for them from Matthew Dyer in Duck Lane, who advertised "padlocks for Blacks or Dogs"; they named them Pompey and found them vastly more amusing than lap-dogs. The gentlemen clad their black servants in more sober livery, relieved by a silver collar, securely rivetted, upon which they caused to be engraved the name of the master and slave and sometimes coat-of-arms and cypher as well. The gentlemen were inclined to classic names. Pluto and Nero were appropriate; the more literary-minded

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perpetuated their favourite philosopher: Socrates, Plato, while the Right Honourable the Earl of Suffolk and Brandon, with fine disregard for convenience of address, had his black boy named Scipio Africanus.

There were approximately twenty thousand negroes in London according to the reckoning of *The Gentlemen's Magazine*. The rich West Indian planters brought their body-slaves to attend them when they retired from business and when they paid visits to Europe. Sometimes the slaves were sold—holidays were apt to be costly, and there were plenty more negroes at home. The slaves found it advantageous to become Christians, to find worthy people to adopt them and thus ensure for themselves a measure of protection against ill-usage. They bore with their lack of liberty, with the petty harshness of employers, but omnipotence often bred callousness and cruelty in their masters. Ill-treated, the slaves would run away. But an absconding negro had but small chance of freedom, branded as he was, collared and penniless. "My Lady Bromfield's black in Lincoln's Inn Fields," with such an inscription on his collar, the negro could not evade detention. My Lady had advertised too, in the *Daily Journal* for her runaway boy. There were many similar advertisements. But one negro, a slave from Barbadoes had better fortune, fortune which was to widen slowly and embrace his fellow slaves.

In 1765 Jonathan Strong had been brought to England by his master, David Lisle. Strong had shivered in the grey lodgings at Wapping where river mists rose and filtered through the ill-fitting windows. Lisle had never been a kind master, propinquity gave stimulus and opportunity to brutality. For some petty negligence he would beat Jonathan Strong about the head with his heavy pistol butt, and Strong, ill with ague, would

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stagger under the blows and infuriate his master by his weakness. Then Lisle would kick him unmercifully until one day brutality gave him no further satisfaction. Kicking and beating Jonathan Strong was like belabouring a sack of flour. "Get out," he roared, and Strong dragged himself away from Wapping and wandered about the unfriendly London streets. He was befriended by a young man, who took him to his brother's surgery nearby. The brother took him to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, where, in course of time, he recovered his health. The brothers found employment for him with an apothecary named Brown, in Fenchurch Street. Jonathan Strong forgot fear and David Lisle.

The young man was Granville Sharp, a clerk in the Ordnance Office, with a salary of £40 a year and "some perquisites." But he was also a fighter. He learned Hebrew because he found himself lacking adequate weapons in argument with a Jew, and Greek because a Socinian with whom he disagreed declared that, without the knowledge of the original of the New Testament, Sharp must misinterpret his views. He was always ready to pick up the glove and when, in 1767, he received a letter from Jonathan Strong, his indignation at the treatment of the African slaves was touched to burning zeal.

Jonathan Strong told him that he had met David Lisle in the street. That his former master had obtained a warrant for his arrest and that he had been detained in the Poultry Compter, and that Lisle had arranged for his sale to a Jamaica planter.

Sharp forthwith visited the Lord Mayor, Sir Robert Kite, and, persuading him of injustice done, obtained his promise to intervene. Sir Robert, exercising his authority, sent for Jonathan Strong and, on 18th September, 1767, the case was tried at the Mansion

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House. Sir Robert Kite heard the case, announced to the court that the man was discharged since there was no evidence against him. As Strong left the court, Laird, the captain of the ship who had been employed for his delivery, and who had attended on behalf of the prosecution, endeavoured to retake him by force.

"I seize him," exclaimed the captain, "as the property of Mr. Kerr." But Granville Sharp tapped him on the shoulder, his long chin thrust out. "And I charge *you* for an assault." And the captain, fearing for his post and his liberty, departed.

For his part, in the case of Strong, Granville Sharp was charged with robbery by David Lisle and challenged to give "gentlemanlike satisfaction." Sharp did not care if he were thought a gentleman or not.

"You are a lawyer," he retorted, "and you shall want no satisfaction which the law can give you."

But he found that the law was apparently against him. The lawyers he consulted, and his counsel, Sir James Eyre, Recorder of London, quoted to him the pronouncement of Yorke and Talbot, in 1729.\*

"We are of the opinion, that a slave coming from the West Indies into Great Britain or Ireland, either with or without his master, does not become free—and that his master's right and property in him is not thereby determined or varied." The Lord Chief Justice Mansfield, they told him, upheld the opinion of Yorke and Talbot. But this did not deter Sharp. He realised that the law was against the slave and to challenge the law he must forge for himself the law's weapons. He began to study English law. David Lisle and his friends began to realise that they had underrated the Ordnance Office

<sup>1</sup> Yorke, afterwards Lord Hardwicke, the Solicitor-General. Talbot, afterwards Lord Talbot, the Attorney-General.

clerk. They hesitated, they prevaricated, and meanwhile Sharp published a tract, in which he embodied the knowledge he had acquired. *The Injustice and Dangerous Tendency of tolerating Slavery in England* was his answer to Lisle's challenge.

Lisle finally abandoned the prosecution and was mulcted in treble costs for failure to proceed.

The case of Strong, however, far from satisfying Sharp, merely made him the more determined to influence the courts to decide that as soon as a slave set foot in England he, *ipso facto* ceased to be a slave. He had behind him the theory of the English law *in favorem libertatis* and he knew that popular instinct must, in the end, influence interpretation.

Sharp had to wait five years and then on 7th February, 1772, the case of *Somerset v. Knowles* was tried in the Court of King's Bench.

The slave *Somerset* had been brought to England from Virginia by his master, Stewart. He had run away and on his recapture his master determined to send him to Jamaica. *Somerset* had been put aboard a West Indiaman, the *Anne and Mary*, Captain Knowles, and kept in irons.

But Granville Sharp had ways of his own for obtaining information about cases of unjustly treated slaves, and the captain was required by a writ of *Habeas Corpus* to state by what authority he detained him.

The court consisted of the Lord Chief Justice, President, and Justices Ashton, Wells and Ashurst. The point at issue was: "Is every man in England entitled to the liberty of his person, unless forfeited by the Laws of England?"

The advocates of *Somerset* affirmed it. Mr. Sergeant Davy opened his case by declaring that: "no man to this

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day *is* or *can be*, a slave in England." Mr. Davy supported his case by quotations from various historical documents. He demonstrated that the laws of England alone, ruled in England. The laws of Virginia, he said, had no more validity in England than those of Japan. He discussed the arguments of *convenience* and concluded by quoting his authorities for stating that "no man could be the property of another."

"There is the case of Cartwright," he continued, "who brought a slave from Russia and would scourge him. For this he was questioned—and it was resolved, that England was too pure an air for slaves to breathe in. That was in the 11th of Queen Elizabeth. I hope, my Lord, the air does not blow worse since—I hope they will never breathe here; for this is my assertion, 'the moment they put their feet on English ground, that moment they become free.' They are subject to the laws and they are entitled to the protection of the laws of this country; and so are their masters, thank God."

Mr. Sergeant Glynn followed with an equally emphatic agreement. By this time Lord Mansfield's somewhat peculiar faith in the opinion of Talbot and Yorke had been shaken. He was torn between the arguments in favour of liberty—the liberty upon which England prided herself—and the close-knit web of precedent and opinion, which would seem to have been cited rather imperfectly. He deferred the case until the following term.

But Granville Sharp, given the law's respite, strengthened his case. He interviewed, he harangued, he wrote letters and pamphlets. He did not care that, by remonstrating with the Government, he, as a government servant, ran the risk of losing his post.

"My Lord," he wrote to the Prime Minister, Lord North, on 18th February, 1772, "Presuming that in-



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formation, concerning every question of a public nature, must of course be agreeable to Your Lordship, I venture to lay before you a little tract, against tolerating slavery in England.

“His Majesty has been pleased lately to recommend to Parliament ‘the providing new laws for supporting defects, or remedying abuses in such instances where it shall be requisite,’ and I apprehend my Lord, that there is no instance, whatever, which requires more *immediate redress*, than the present miserable and deplorable slavery of negroes and Indians, *as well as white English servants in our colonies*. . . .

“Nevertheless I don’t mention this as a subject proper for Parliamentary consideration: for the laws of England (God be thanked) are sufficiently clear with respect to *slavery in this island*. And though some enormous outrages have now and then been committed by ignorant masters, in attempting to carry off by force their quondam slaves, yet, if the Judges do their duty, by determining according to the laws already in force (*for Juricandum est Legibus non exemplis*. 4. Ca. 33,—we must judge by *law* not by precedent), there will be no necessity for Parliament to interfere. . . .”

He enclosed a second pamphlet with explanations, and a letter from “a gentleman in Maryland” protesting against “this country of most wretched slavery.”

Whether Lord North, preoccupied by American taxation, found the information “agreeable” is doubtful. There is no record that he answered the letter.

On 9th May the hearing was resumed. The defence contented itself by reaffirming the arguments of Davy and Glynn.

The hearing was again adjourned till 14th May, when Mr. Hargrave and Mr. Alleyne took up the defence.

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"This man is here," they contended. "He owes submission to the laws of England and has a corresponding right to the protection of these laws."

Mr. Wallace then rose for the plaintiff. He said it was not only inconvenient but "absurd and unjust to divest a man of his rightful property, only because he sailed in pursuit of his lawful business, from one country to another."

He was ably supported by Mr. Dunning.

Granville Sharp expressed his opinion of this gentleman in no uncertain terms. Dunning had led the defence in the case of a negro, Thomas Lewis, in 1771. The case of Lewis had been similar to that of *Somerset*, and Dunning had declared that "no man can be legally detained as a slave in England."

"This is an abominable and insufferable practice in lawyers," thundered Sharp, "to undertake causes diametrically opposite to their own declared opinions of law and justice."

Again the case was adjourned. Lord Mansfield's confidence in the Yorke and Talbot pronouncement was cracked but not broken. On 21st May he again heard Mr. Dunning eloquently supporting the indispensable necessity of the relation of master and slave. Twice he threw out a suggestion "that the master might put an end to present litigation by manumitting the slave."

Finally, on Monday, 22nd June, in Trinity term, 1772, he delivered judgment in the case of *Somerset* and Knowles upon the return of the Habeas Corpus. Lord Mansfield first stated the return and then spoke:

"... The cause returned is, the slave absented himself and departed from his master's service, and refused to return and serve him during his stay in England; whereupon, by his master's orders, he was put on board the ship by force, and there detained in secure custody, to be

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carried out of the kingdom and sold. So high an act of dominion must derive its authority, if any such it has, from the law of the kingdom where executed. A foreigner cannot be imprisoned here on the authority of any law existing in his own country. The power of a master over his servant is different in all countries, more or less limited or extensive; the exercise of it therefore must always be regulated by the laws of the place where exercised. The power claimed by this return never was in use here. The state of slavery is so odious that nothing can be suffered to support it but positive law. We cannot say that the cause set forth by this return, is allowed or approved by the laws of the kingdom and therefore the man must be discharged."

The exact words of the judgment show how carefully Mansfield had argued the matter with himself.

Here we have deliberate interpretation. This duty of the judges is of the first importance, for interpretation depends, not upon the meaning of a word in the past, but upon the current meaning in present acceptance. The word "odious" is pregnant. The inference is that the courts must always in the end conform to the popular and undoubted belief of what is right or wrong. The usage of the courts had for a long time been *in favorem libertatis* and precedents can be created in interpretation as readily as in mere administration. The English law is dynamic, not static, it has the transcendent merit of "judge-made law."

"*Fiat justitia ruat caelum.*" Lord Mansfield had pronounced. But if the heavens remained in their accustomed place, the thunder of abuse and indignation shook them.

The planters and their champions declared the judgment to be doubtful, inexplicit, notorious, partial, and

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where inspiration failed them in plausible condemnation, they loftily pronounced the remainder of the judgment to be "too vague to come into consideration."

A gentleman writing under the pseudonym of "A Planter," was ponderously ironical: "The planters of course have been left," he said, "as much puzzled by this DELPHIC AMBIGUITY, as the sages themselves appear to have been, in forming their judgments upon the subject. The matter having been confounded in this grand uncertainty."

But Granville Sharp was not impressed and published destructive criticism of the opposition.

"This judgment will not appear doubtful or inexplicit, (as some have too hastily esteemed it) if the whole be taken together, and the effect of it be duly considered," he wrote.

"Lord Mansfield pronounced the sentiments or judgment of the whole bench, and therefore if any thing was wrong, the blame ought not to rest on him alone; nevertheless, if we fairly examine what was said, we shall find no room for blame or cavil. His Lordship said, 'We pay due attention to the opinion of Sir Philip Yorke and Mr. Talbot, in the year 1729.'

"Now the purport of that opinion was, that the master, may legally compel his slave to return to the plantation.

"Lord Mansfield modestly declined giving a direct contradiction, in express words, to the opinion of two such very eminent and learned lawyers; but chose rather to condemn it, tacitly, by the effect of the judgment, which he was about to pronounce, and therefore he merely recited the opinion without the least comment, and proceeded to the determination of the court upon the case before them; which is clear and incontrovertible with respect to the main point of the question, viz. the power claimed by the master, of carrying away his slave by force.

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"The power claimed by this return, (said the Chief Justice) was never in use here, or acknowledged by the law. Now it was certainly the duty of the court to give judgment according to known laws, and not to be influenced by any opinion whatsoever."

It is curious that the opinion of the law officers was so freely quoted while the dicta of two earlier judges were ignored. As early as the reign of Anne, Lord Chief Justice Holt had declared "as soon as a negro comes into England he becomes free," while Mr. Justice Powell at the same period declared "the law takes no notice of a negro."

Since the extinction of villeinage in 1617 no form of slavery in England has been recognised by the law. In the Colonies however it was legalised by the statutes in the reigns of William III, George II, George III. Long before Holt and Mansfield, moreover, Sir Leoline Jenkins at the Old Bailey Admiralty Sessions in 1674 in his charge pronounced *obiter* that there was "no such thing as a slave in England."

Somersett v. Knowles became a leading authority and determined the judgment in many cases before the courts. In the Prerogative Court, on 11th May, 1773, Cay sued Crichton as executor of a will for omitting to include a negro in an inventory of "the deceased's goods and chattels."

Upon argument, it was said by the counsel on behalf of Crichton, that by a very late case in the King's Bench, of Knowles and Somersett, negroes were declared to be free in England, and consequently they could not be the subjects of property, or be considered as any part of a personal estate.

Cay pleaded that the case of Somersett had been determined only in 1772, and that the date of decease was

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1769, at which time negroes were certainly considered as personal property. This was very poor argument. The judgment was retrospective and therefore Dr. Hay, the judge, answered that the court had not met to try "any question relating to freedom and slavery." Negroes had been declared free by the court which had the proper jurisdiction and he therefore ordered the clause in which the negro was mentioned to be struck out.

Again there was protest. But in 1776 indignation brimmed over when a negro servant himself brought action in the High Court of Admiralty before Sir George Hay.

George Rogers, alias Rigges, a negro boy of nineteen years of age, had been a servant to several gentlemen in England. In the summer of 1766 he was out of employment. Then it was that he first made the acquaintance of two Englishmen, John Latter and John Sessins. Having gained the negro's confidence, they proceeded to contract with Arthur Jones for his sale as a slave. An assignment was accordingly drawn up and signed by John Latter, by which Rogers was transferred to Messrs. Mason and Jones, as a slave, for the sum of twelve guineas.

One day in August, Rogers, under some false pretence, was carried on board a ship lying at Deptford—the *Britannia*, owned by Messrs. Mason and Jones. Once on board, pretence was abandoned and he was carried down into the sail room and locked up. He was kept there until the ship sailed and then he was set to work as the cook's assistant. Sometimes, if the cook were drunk, or indisposed, he took charge of the galley. The *Britannia*, a slave ship, sailed to the coast of Africa, and from thence to Port Rico, where Rogers was offered for sale with the rest of the cargo, but he found an opportunity to relate his story to the Spanish merchants. The merchants refused to

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buy him and the captain made the best of it by sending him back to the galley. It was two years before the *Britannia* returned to London. But when Rogers applied for his discharge with the other seamen, he was told that he was a slave and not a sailor.

So Rogers remained on board until one day he contrived to evade the officers and seamen and escape ashore. He fled to the house of Mr. Shea, one of his old masters, who took him, at first a little frightened, to Doctors Commons where they asked a proctor to help him recover his liberty and his pay for two years in the reeking galley. Mr. Faulckner, the proctor, wrote to Arthur Jones, who decided that it would be politic to agree to meet Rogers in the proctor's office. But if there should be no Rogers to meet? The affair would be greatly simplified. It was not difficult for John Sessins to trace Rogers to a tavern where he was pleasantly passing the time awaiting Mr. Faulckner's summons. Mr. Jones sat in his coach outside and when Rogers appeared with Sessins, he was flung into the coach and driven to the river. Mr. Jones had chosen another of his ships to avoid any inconvenient investigation, and in her he chained Rogers to the mainmast and left him there.

But Mr. Shea and Mr. Faulckner were not so easily defeated and they appealed to the Deputy-Marshall of the Court of Admiralty and obtained a warrant for Rogers' release.

Rogers won his case although the defendants urged that "the plaintiff was a slave, and consequently was not entitled to any reward for his service at all."

"The practice of buying and selling slaves," said the judge, "was certainly very common in England, before the case of *Somerset*, in the Court of King's Bench, 1772, but however it might have been the law of

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the 'Royal Exchange,' I hope it never was the law of England."

A negro slave bringing action—and successful action—in the courts! What was England coming to?

The Spaniards too, were not behaving in a manner calculated to uphold white prestige. An English man-of-war, together with another ship, had been sent from Grenada to the Spanish main to claim some slaves who had escaped from the British West Indies. The Spaniards had refused their assistance in recapture. "Instead of meeting with that justice and civility which they had a right to expect, the Governors at both places, we are told, treated them with the greatest haughtiness and contempt and refused to give them the smallest satisfaction." The Editor of *The Gazetteer* of 30th June, 1773, was pained and disappointed.

But Granville Sharp would not allow the indictment to pass. He had espoused the cause of the negro wholeheartedly and never refused a challenge.

"The writer of the paragraph," he declares in one of his many pamphlets, "expresses great disappointment on account of the issue of this unwarrantable and disgraceful embassy . . . but alas, the very expectation of better treatment (upon an errand so unlawful in itself, and so disgraceful to His Majesty's naval service) is a proof of the most deplorable degeneracy and ignorance."

*Vox populi?* The Press was less controlled by vested interests than it is to-day, nevertheless, public opinion, through ignorance or lethargy, followed the attitude of those members of society economically necessary to them—those who formed strong opinions and developed principles upon all matters which touched their purses.

Lord Mansfield was well aware that an influential section of public opinion was against him in the Somer-



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sett judgment. By his decision in the High Court he had established the law on the point involved. The decision given from the King's Bench was now the law of the land and could only be overruled by a superior court. The opinion of Yorke and Talbot had been merely Counsel's opinion. It had been given to reassure the London merchants. Law was not what the Law officers thought to be the law. Nevertheless, the views of the Solicitor-General and the Attorney-General were treated with the same respect as a letter from the Home Secretary would be to-day. But they did not establish law, and could not. The matter was beyond an Attorney-General's fiat.

Lord Mansfield contradicted the Law officers, incurred the obloquy of a society founded on vested interest, and gave the decision he felt to be right. He had been charged with timidity in that his decision merely protected the slave brought to England from being forced to return to America or the West Indies against his will, and nothing more. But this was the only point at issue in the case of *Somerset* and *Knowles*. The fundamental question, the case of slavery itself, involved matters at that time completely outside the scope of his decision. There is no doubt but that there were powerful Court influences in favour of slavery. In 1770 George III issued an instruction under his own hand commanding the governor of Virginia upon pain of the highest displeasure to assent to no law by which the importation of slaves could be prohibited or obstructed. The judgment may indeed have achieved little in itself to ameliorate the state of negro slaves. There were still hundreds of thousands of slaves, hundreds of thousands of pounds invested yearly in the slave trade, and as much money again held in mortgages on West Indian plantations. Its importance lies,

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however, in the legal condemnation of the abuses and illegalities of the slave trade and in its recognition of the right of the negro slave to be heard and judged as a free citizen.

Were then, negro slaves human beings like themselves? Society asked. In awakening that recognition lies Lord Mansfield's claim to the respect of posterity.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CAPTAINS

**T**HE Liverpool merchants read the reports of the case of Somersett and Knowles, shook their heads and agreed with the planter. But they failed to see therein cause for unease. The noble Lord's judgment had in no way impaired their trade. It did not greatly affect them whether the negroes which they bought in Africa and sold in the West Indies were freed in England or not. The slaves had better stay in the West Indies, where indeed they belonged, and let the gentlemen employ civilised white servants. A great deal of unnecessary attention had been given to the case. The merchants confined themselves within walls built of ledgers, bank-books and trade returns; hedged themselves with the masts of their Guineamen, and the orbit of their lives thus limited, they could not suspect the possibility of wide and public opposition to their trade. They banished the slave Somersett and Lord Mansfield from their counting-houses and went on with their affairs.

The personal element was of supreme importance in the Guinea trade. The merchants took great care in the choosing of their captains. They had to be not only iron disciplinarians and good seamen, but shrewd business men and tactful. Before each voyage even the most esteemed received elaborate written or verbal instructions from his owners.

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A typical example of such instructions is to be found in a letter, dated at Liverpool 14th April, 1762, from the owners of the Marquis of Granby to her master, Captain Ambrose Lace. The orders were detailed and explicit. Captain Lace was to sail for Africa by the first favourable wind in company with the Douglas, Captain Finch. Since both vessels were "Ships of Force" and "Tolerably well mann'd," the owners considered that they would be well able to beat off any attack; they recommended Captain Lace to keep a good look out and, in the event of his taking a prize, to send her either to Liverpool or to Cork. If he found other ships trading at Old Calabar on his arrival, he was to come to an agreement with their masters "so as not to advance the Price on each other," and he was to do his best "to keep down the Comesys which in Generall are too extravagant there." With his receipts from the cargo he was expected to be able to buy 550 slaves, and might have £400 over to lay out in ivory.

The owners enjoined him to be "very Choice" in buying the slaves, and to see that he took "no Dis-temper'd or old Ones," but only such as would "answer at the Place of Sale and stand the Passage." Since the high death rate of slaves from Calabar was notorious, he must use every means in his power to preserve their health, by not keeping the ship "too Close in the Day time and at Night to keep the Ports shut as the night air is very pernicious."

The captain's personal perquisite was ten slaves; the first mate and the surgeon were allowed two each; these were to be male and female in equal numbers. The remaining officers were allowed two or three hundredweight of screveloes (undersized elephants' teeth) between them.

Having completed his business at Calabar, Captain Lace was to make the best of his way to Barbados,

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where the owner's agents would deliver him instructions for continuing his voyage to one of the Leeward Islands. The owners indicated the price they expected the slaves to make; with the receipts he was to buy in sugar, cotton and coffee, and with any balance to take up bills of exchange.

If the slaves failed to fetch the required price in the Leeward Islands, he was to proceed to Jamaica and arrange to sell them there, loading in return mahogany, sugar, ginger, cotton, pimento, and about ten puncheons of rum. He was instructed that the agents would furnish him with funds for wages and other expenses, "in which we recommend the utmost Frugality." His attention was drawn to the necessity of keeping "Good Rules and good Harmony" among his crew, and a good watch, particularly when he had slaves on board; also to guard against outbreaks of fire, especially during an action, and to allow no cartridges to be handed out of the magazine without boxes, to prevent powder being sprinkled on the deck.

Finally, in the event of his "mortality" ("which," said the owners piously, "God forbid"), his first mate must succeed him in command. They ended by wishing him a prosperous voyage and a safe return, and subscribed themselves "his assured friends."

Captain Ambrose Lace was a shrewd man. Evidently he carried out his owner's instructions punctiliously. He not only wrote reports but he wrote them on diagrams more remarkable for intricacy than clarity.

His account of his reception by the African chief, Tatty Baba, straggles round a plan of the quadruple stockade of the palace, crowds into the courtyards and enclosures and ends up with a dot and a dash in the yard where he supposed Tatty's "wives all live, but I was not admitted into it."

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King Tatty had invited him to dine and afterwards to inspect some prime slaves he wished to sell. Captain Ambrose Lace, in full-skirted coat and neat wig, alighted from his hammock at the western gate of the six-foot bamboo stockade, becoming hotter and more irate as he tramped round behind the negro guard. "I assure you," he writes in the innermost passage, "I was heartily tired with walking four and a half times round this place. . . ." Relieved, he saw a bridge guarded by a black sentry and was finally ushered into the presence of King Tatty himself. The chief was surrounded by his favourite wives, their foreheads, their cheekbones and nostrils gleamed in the half-light of the mud-walled room. There was a reek of wood smoke and palm oil. At King Tatty's feet sat one of his wives "holding a silver tureen, and watching the motion of his head so as to be ready to catch the saliva as it fell from his mouth."

The king was grotesquely dressed in stained European finery. On his head a gold-laced cap. The prim sprigged patterns, the neat small stripes of the Manchester drapery looked pale and timid against the womens' bold blackness.

The negro king and the English captain exchange courtesies through the captain's linguister.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Lace was thirsty and, no lover of sweet, sickly palm-toddy, he evaded discourtesy by offering King Tatty a flask of wine.

Dinner was prepared in a room built in the south-west corner of the enclosure. Captain, king and followers crossed the hard mud courtyard and sat down to a meal of boiled fowls and rice, and greenstuff which the captain thought was like spinach. The serving-woman brought

<sup>1</sup> Interpreter. Usually a mulatto, sometimes a negro employed in the slave ships.

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it from the women's quarters beyond the courtyard; it was tepid and the flesh stringy and tasteless. But the wine was good Madeira and plentiful. Soon the company were sweating and merry. Mosquitoes set the captain scratching; their insistence and his business instinct prompted him to rise. The slaves? They were outside in the courtyard, a dozen of them herded together, men and women, guarded by Tatty Baba's warriors. They wore collars of twisted lianas and some had their wrists clamped and bound between logs.

The plan of the courtyard did not permit of description of the ensuing bargaining. Such concrete and important matters the captain reserved for his official accounts.

That he bartered shrewdly there is no doubt, for in later life he became "merchant and shipowner of St. Paul's Square." His eldest son Captain William Lace fitted out and commanded a privateer. Captain Lace's second son attained eminence in another sphere. Joshua Lace was the founder and first president of the Liverpool Law Society. Did the former activities of his father offend his legal principles, his eminent respectability?

Captain Ambrose Lace traded chiefly to Old Calabar. Calabar was divided into the New and Old Town and, with the growing trade with Europe, there was a growing animosity between the natives of the two towns.

"The natives are at variance with each other, and, in my opinion, it will never be ended before the destruction of all the people at Old Town . . ." came a report from Old Calabar in 1767.

There is a freemasonry among seafaring men. It may well be that the writer's opinion was adopted by captains trading to Calabar, or it may have been but a consolidation of opinion already prevalent among the slave traders. For in that year the destruction was accomplished.

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Captain Lace lay in the river off the town. Besides the Edgar of Liverpool, which he commanded, there were five other ships waiting to slave: the Canterbury, Captain Sparkes of London; the Duke of York, Captain Beaven of Liverpool; the Indian Queen, Captain Lewis of Bristol; the Nancy and the Oxford.

Captain John Ashley Hall, of the Neptune, subsequently related that, from the story of his boatswain Thomas Rutter, who had been boatswain of the Canterbury, rivalry between the natives of Old and New Town had reached such a pitch that "... through fear of each other, for a considerable time, no canoe would leave their towns to go up the river for slaves."

The captains had taken no interest in the private antagonism and petty quarrels of the negroes. That murder and civil strife had arisen through the slave trade with England did not concern them. But when trade was made to suffer they all agreed that interference was necessary. Accordingly they consulted with each other and came to the conclusion that the people of Old Town must be shown that the captains would brook no more delays, that they were not to be thus hindered in their business. They made their plans and enlisted the aid of the natives of New Town who, foreseeing profit for themselves, did not hesitate to betray their fellow-countrymen. The captains sent letters to the headman of Old Town, proposing that they and their attendants should come aboard the ships, there to meet the chiefs of New Town and compose their differences under the auspices of the impartial white men. The headmen gladly agreed. They were tired with the strain of constant guerilla warfare and welcomed the opportunity of reconciliation. That night the chief of Old Town sent, as a token of good faith, one of his favourite women to the headman of New Town.



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The chief, his son and his three brothers and twenty-seven of their attendants came alongside the Edgar. Captain Lace was cordial, but after an exchange of courtesies, whether from humanitarian or politic reasons he invited the king on board and sent the main party over to the Duke of York.

The headmen climbed aboard and their attendants waited below in the long shallow canoes. There were no men from New Town to meet them, but they were trustful and completely unsuspecting. The captain's linguist began his high-flown preamble. Then a single gun was fired and before its echo had died away the white officers and crew, heavily armed, had surrounded them. Taken utterly by surprise the negroes tried to escape, a few jumped overboard, some were killed resisting the attack, and the three brothers were shackled and flung below.

At the gun signal the people of New Town had rushed out from behind the sandy point, where they had been waiting in ambush, and massacred every man of Old Town they saw on shore or swimming from the canoes which were being fired on from the English ships.

On the deck of the Edgar the chief fought desperately and, killing two seamen, jumped into a small canoe and began paddling for the shore.

Bodies of his people floating, leaving long red swirls in the muddy water; guns roaring behind him; the men of New Town bloody and exultant on the shore. A high whistling; an impact that sent him down and down; his canoe shot to pieces by a ship's six-pounder. Unhurt and gasping, he struck out of the wreckage for the jungle shore above the town, round him splashed pursuing musket shots. The soft mud of the shore, the dangling mangrove roots. . . .

The firing was over. Three hundred of the men of Old

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Town were dead. The chiefs of New Town came alongside the Duke of York clamouring for the captive brothers.

But the captain was dealing with natives proven treacherous. He told them that not until he had been provided with a good cargo of slaves would the prisoners be delivered. The New Town men showed dissatisfaction and the captain, to prove his good will, agreed to hand over one of the three brothers. The man begged to be allowed to stay, even as a captive, in the ship, but the captain was adamant. The New Town chiefs beheaded him in the canoe.

Captain Lace was not directly involved in the death of the king's brother but all the captains had agreed upon the action they were to take, and it is impossible that any one of them could have been unaware of the carnage which would take place with their support and connivance.

Captain Hall, when he gave evidence at the enquiry instituted by the Lords Committee of Council into the conditions of the slave trade in 1790, asserted that there had been one captain in the Calabar massacre "who did not combine with the people of New Calabar to surprise the Old Town people." But he did not know the name of this captain or that of his ship.

This at least seems to indicate that Captain Lace, if not entirely ignorant, as he maintains, was not a direct participant in the actual slaughter. He subsequently denied that any meeting of the captains had taken place. The people of Old Town "were not invited aboard insidiously to be made slaves," he asserted. The chief people of Old Town came on board at half-past seven in the morning. About eight o'clock he was about to pour out coffee for himself and the king of Old Town when he heard firing. He

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went on deck and was told that his gunner had been killed. The king got into his canoe and left his son on board. The firing lasted about quarter of an hour. He had no time to make observations of the two parties. He was occupied with preparations for the defence of the ship. He maintained that none of his people were concerned in the affray and that he had "never heard that the English entered into this business with an improper view."

"The inconsistency of acting on two opposite principles, however it may vex the soul of the philosopher, rarely troubles the common man, indeed he is seldom even aware of it," wrote Sir James Frazer, and it can usually be said of the slave merchants and captains that by sophistry they really came to believe that they were saving the negroes of Africa from the savage barbarity of their chiefs. They quoted Captain William Mackintosh who, trading to Senegal in 1778, had asked a native chief if he intended to release the prisoners of war he could not sell. "What, them go again, to come to kill me again," was the answer. "In short," said Captain Mackintosh, "he gave me to understand, that they would be put to death."

This is a conceivable if unwarrantable attitude. But the massacre of Old Calabar was deliberate cold-blooded treachery, based on despicable abuse of faith.

That the captain's action did not pass uncondemned in England, even at this period, is shown by the subsequent history of the two captive chiefs whom the captain of the Duke of York failed to deliver to the chief of New Town as he had promised. Two able-bodied negroes were worth from £100 to £150 to him. He had a full complement of slaves and there was no more to be gained by conciliating the New Town headman. So he carried his negroes to the West Indies and sold them there with the rest of the slaves.

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The two negroes escaped to Virginia and three years later persuaded the captain of a trader to take them to Bristol. "Where the captain . . . fearing he had done wrong, meditated carrying or sending them back to Virginia. Jones, of Bristol, who had ships trading to Old Calabar, had them taken from the ship (where they were in irons) by Habeas Corpus. After enquiry how they were brought from Africa, they were liberated, and put in one of Jones's ships, for Old Calabar." Mr. Jones was in possession of a copy of the deposition of William Floyd, mate of the Indian Queen, which agreed in principle with the depositions of the chief's sons taken at Bristol. He wrote, however, to Captain Lace for his corroboration and received the following indignant answer:

LIVERPOOL, 11th November, 1773.

MR. THOS. JONES,

Sir—Yours of the 7th I received wherein you desire I will send an Affidavit concerning the two black men you mention, Little Epm and Ancoy, in what manner the ware taken off the coast, and that I know them to be Brothers to Grandy Epm. Robin John; as to little Epm. I remember him very well, as to Ancoy Rob. Rob, John I cant recolect I ever saw him. I knew old Robin John the Father of Grandy Epm. and I think all the Family, but never found that little Epm. was one of old Robin's sons, and as to Rob. Rob. John he was not Old Rob. Johns son. Old Robin took Rob. Rob. Jno. mother for a wife when Robin Rob. Jno. was a boy of 6 or eight years old, and as to Rob. Rob. Jun. he never had a son that I heard of. You know very well the custom of that place whatever Man or Woman gos to live in any family the take the Name of the first man in the family and call him Father, how little Epm came into the family I cant tell, and as to

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what ship they came off the coast in I know no more than you, therefore cant make Affidavit Eather to their being Brothers to Grandy Epm or the manner he was brought off the Coast, as to Grandy Epm. you know very well has been Guilty of so many bad Actons, no man can say anything in his favour, a History of his life would exceed any of our Pirates, the whole sett at Old Town you know as well as me. I brought young Epm home, and had him at school near two years, then sent him out, he cost me above sixty pounds and when his Fathers gone I hope the son will be a good man. As to Mr. Floyd he says more then I ever knew or heard of hes in many Errors, even in the Name of the vessell I was in hes wrong, there was no such a ship as the Hector while I was at Callebarr, a man should be careful when on Oath, how he knows the two men to be brothers to Epm. I cant tell, I have several times had the pedigree of all the familys from Abashey the foregoing acct of Rob. Rob. was from him, but to prove the two men to be Epms. brothers I dont know how you will do it, I assure you I don't think they are, if you think to send a vessell to Old Town it might answer for you to purchase the two men I once bogt [bought] one at Jamaica a man of no consiquance in family but it answered the Expenche.

I am Sir your hbl Servt.

---

P.S. I left the Duke of York and Indian Queen at Callebarr."

Mr. Jones traded to Calabar. Possibly he was not unaware of the material advantage which his act of humanity would assuredly bring him. But that he troubled to evoke the law on behalf of the two negroes and chose to repatriate them at his own expense rather than offer

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monetary compensation testifies to a then unusual recognition of the Africans as fellow men with the emotions and desires of men and not animals.

Captain Lace was well versed in the intricacies of Robin John's family tree. Since the massacre he had continued to trade to Calabar as a merchant owner and not a captain. There was no animosity towards him in Old Town. This may be another proof that he played no part in the betrayal of 1767, although he was not the only captain to enjoy the favour of the people of Old Calabar. Even Captain Hall, who gave up the slave trade "from conviction that it was perfectly illegal, and founded in blood," admitted that the English were as well received after the massacre as before it.

Indeed Giandy King George of Old Town writes to Captain Lace as a friend well able to sympathise with the enormities of slaver captains trading with him

OULD TOWN, OULD CALLABAR,  
January 13, 1773.

MARCHANT LACE, SR,—I take this opertunity of Wrighting to you and to aquant you of the behaveor of Sum ships lately in my water there was Capt Bishop of Bristol and Capt. Jackson of Liverpool laying in the river when Capt. Sharp arrived and wanted to purchase his cargo as I suppose he ought to do but this Bishop and Jackson consoulted not to let him slave with out he payed the same Coomey that they did thy sent him out of the River so he went to the Camoroons and was away two months when he arrived in my water again and thy still insisted upon his paying the Coomey accordingly he did a Nuff to Blind them so I gave him slaves to his content and so did all my people, till he was full and

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is now ready to sail only weats for to have a fue affairs settled and this sall be don before he sails to his sattisfaction, and now he may very well Laffe at them that was so much his Enemyes before, for that same day thy sent him out of the River this Jackson and Bishop and a brig that was [tender?] to Jackson at night began to fire at my town without the least provecation and continued it for twenty-four hours for which I gave them two cows but it seemed as after words Jackson confirmed that Bishop and him was to cary away all our pawns as it was lickely true for Jackson did cary of his but more than that before he sailed he tould me that if I went on bord of Bishop I shuld be stopped by him and my hed cut off and sent to the Duke at Nuetown, but I put that out of his power for to cut of my hed or cary of the pawns by stoping his boats and sum of his people and so I would Jackson had I known his entent when he informed me of Bishop, but he took care not to divulge his own secrets which he was much to blem if he did so my friend marchant Lace if you send Ship to my water again send good man all same your Self or same marchant Black. No send ould man or man want to be grandy man, if he want to be grandy man let he stand home for marchant one time, not himn com heare or all Same Capt Sharp he very good lema but I no tell before that time Capt. Sharp go to Camoroon he left his mate till he came back again, so they say I do bad for them but I will leave you to Jude that for if any ship fire at my town I will fire for ship again Marchant Lace Sr there is Mr. Canes Capt. Sharp and second mate a young man and a very good man he is very much Liked by me and all my people of Callabar, so if you plase to send him he will make as quick a dispatch as any man you can send and I believe as much to your advantage for I want a good many ship to cum, for the more ships

## THE CAPTAINS

the more treade wee have for them for the New town people and has blowed abuncko for no ship to go from my water to them nor any to cum from them to me tho Bishop is now lying in Cross River but they only lat him stay till this pelaver is satted for I have ofered him 10 slaves to Readeem the Pawns and let him have his white people, but he will not for I dount want to do any bad thing to him or any ship that cums to my water but there is 4 of my sons gone allredy with Jackson and I don't want any more of them caried off by any other vausell."

Merchant Lace received many letters from Grandy King George. They consisted chiefly of long lists of his requirements. His phonetic spelling and complete lack of punctuation render them arduous reading. "... Send sum Lucking glasses at 2 coprs and 4 coprs for trade and coomey . . . and small Bells. Let them be good ones and send me some Lango Sum Large and sum small and sum curl beads. Send me one Lucking glass six foot long and six foot wide. Let it have a strong woden fremen. . . Send me one table and six chears for my house and one two armchere for my self to sit in." He demanded knives and forks, tankards and even a close stool for his house, and red and blue coats, gold laced hats and razors for his person. He had, in fact, become a parasite of the slave trader. From the trade-goods he enumerates it is apparent that Captain Lace, merchant, did a very flourishing trade with Old Calabar. He had a comfortable house in John Street and became partner in the solid firm of Aspinall, Roscoe & Lace.

Another noted captain who traded to Calabar was Captain Roberts of the Thomas. He frequented the Sailors' Block Inn, drank undiluted Jamaica rum and tolerated no interference. In the Guinea trade he had



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earned the sobriquet "Bully" Roberts. To-day it appears an inadequate description, for it is recorded of him that he never hesitated to shoot an insubordinate sailor and throw him overboard, and that he incited the African kings to murder and rapine in order to fill his ships with slaves. In 1767 he sailed for the West Indies with a cargo of 400 men and 230 women slaves. "Bully" Roberts was well-satisfied with his trading. He foresaw good profit for himself and a bonus from the owners. In seven weeks he would make Kingston. But the Thomas ran into bad weather a few days out. The slaves had to remain below hatches day and night. They were unable to move. They were shackled two and two and there was barely room to lie flat on the platforms. The air-ports were closed and the wind and the rain only reached those lying beneath the gratings. The negroes were seasick, developed dysentery and fever from the filth and fetid air. They began to die daily and still the weather showed no signs of improvement. Two months, three months, the water ration cut far below necessity, the Thomas still making small headway. Captain Roberts decided that water was too precious to waste on the sick. Some of the negroes were too ill and emaciated to fetch a price in Jamaica. Better to keep the strong ones healthy. The sick by his orders were thrown overboard.

After a four months' voyage the Thomas reached Kingston. Captain Roberts had lost one hundred slaves in the Middle Passage. He congratulated himself that he had lost no more. and after all, he reflected, it was an "ill wind. . . ." for at Kingston slaves were scarce and he sold his whole cargo of five hundred and thirty at an average of £60 a head and returned to Liverpool well content.

Captain Robert Bostock also became a ship owner and merchant. In 1783 he was master of the "Good Ship

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Bloom, bound from Liverpool Towards Africa America and back to Liverpool."

On 16th August he sailed with fair weather for Cape Mount and on 4th September, called at Teneriffe. From the windward coast he brought 307 slaves to Antigua, where he sold them all for £35 or £40 each. The profit to Messrs. Fox Croft and Company was £9635. 9. 7 and Captain Bostock's commission amounted to £360. 14. 3.

By 1789 he had become "a very considerable African merchant." Although from existing records it appears that Mr. William Walton, when he wrote on Robert Bostock's behalf to solicit the services of William Handley, Esq., Slave-agent of Puerto Square, was guilty of exaggeration, when he thus described him.

"Sir," wrote Captain Bostock in 1789 to Francis Levett, 60, Charlotte Street, Portland Place.

"Yours of the 19th inst. to Mr. Moss was this Day shew'd me by him; I have three small Vessels gone to the Windward Coast if you approve of the terms as under shall have no objections to contract with you for your Number, that is, to give £42 p Head Sterling clear of all Expences to take the Assortment as under with liberty to refuse three, to be took out of the Vessel at her arrival and the Vessel to be dispd. in 14 days full of freight and for Liverpool, and to have an Approv'd Guarantee in London for the payment of the Bills as is always Customy. with us in that trade shall accept of  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Nett proceeds to be paid at three days sight and the other  $\frac{2}{3}$  at Six and Twelve Months Sight.

Your answer by return post  
will oblige your Most  
Obedt. Hble Servt.  
R. B.

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### Assortment of Slaves viz.

20	Men				
20	Women				
10	Boys from four feet upwards				
10	Girls	„	„	„	„
10	Boys from 3ft. 9in. to 4 ft.				
10	Girls	„	„	„	„

—

80

“P.S. If you don’t approve of the above assortment I expect the Schooner Little Ben Cap Fryer Master to be in Barbs. (Barbadoes) in July with 73 slaves by the Limitation of the last out if you will take that cargo at 40£ Sterling clear, having liberty to refuse three, but can’t tell what assortment she may have. . . . .”

Robert Bostock’s letter-books show him to have been an industrious man and an indefatigable correspondent, but he appears to have owned only four small ships. The schooner Little Ben, Captain Fryer; The Bess, Captain Doyle; The Jemmy, Captain Williams and the Kite, Captain Bowers.

His frequent and detailed letters to his captains were doubtless outcome of the knowledge and experience he himself had gained while master of a slaving vessel.

“If your Cargo is Healthfull,” he instructs Captain Williams at Barbados, in May 1789, “and they will not give you £36, £37 or £38 per Head all round for your Slaves you are to proceed to Kingston in Jamaica and apply to the undermentioned Gentm. whom I have a guarantee for as under, and deliver your Cargo to the Gentm. that will give you the best Price & the Shortest Sighted Bills and quickest dispatch. I hope you will be very carefull about your Slaves and take none on board but what is Healthy and Young and not make the same

## THE CAPTAINS

excuse you did last Voyage and take care to settle all your accounts before you leave the Coast. . .”

There is no record of Captain William’s excuses. The offence, however, must have been a venial one or Captain Williams had profited by reproof, since Robert Bostock, in subsequent no less detailed letters finds time to tell him that he has seen his father “and given him your news”; and that he has received and shipped a sack of potatoes from that thoughtful parent for his son lying off the African coast.

Mrs. Bostock, too, was on friendly terms with the captains’ wives; she would invite them to drink tea with her occasionally, and Captain Bostock would record the event in his next letter. He was an exacting master. Captains Fryer, Bowers and Doyle smiled wryly when at the end of meticulous instructions Robert Bostock would add “But I do not mean to tye your Hands on your Back as you must be the best Judge. . .”

Captain Williams had once taken this epistolary *envoi* literally; now he knew better.

On reaching Kingston, Jamaica, with a cargo of slaves, Captain William Doyle found waiting for him a letter written by Captain Bostock at Liverpool on 4th May, 1789, advising him that recent cargoes of slaves had been sold in Jamaica at an average price of £40 a head, and that if his own cargo arrived in a healthy condition he could expect to obtain £38 each for them, particularly as there were likely to be many speculators in slaves, on account of the Spanish ports being open. If he disposed of them to Messrs. Munro and Co. of Grenada, that firm would let him have some rum at market price, without commission; in that event he was to take thirty puncheons, but he must try to have the liquor put in his own puncheons, or ask Messrs. Munro to take his; “but,”

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

Captain Bostock added, "I refer you to former Orders in regard to bringing Produce."

Alternatively, Captain Bostock enclosed a letter to a gentleman in Trinidad, and suggested that the slaves might fetch a good price in dollars at the Carracues. The Trinidad agent would be the best judge of which island to go to, but Captain Doyle was warned that if this gentleman accompanied him to any of the Spanish ports a preliminary agreement must be made as to the commission to be paid. He must on no account dispose of the cargo until he had received the whole of the purchase price in dollars, hides, timber and other produce. If he failed to sell elsewhere he was at liberty to try Jamaica, or Barbados or Grenada, "but I shall leave the Whole of the Management to you," declared Captain Bostock, and added, "if your Cargo is sickly you must make the best Hand you can of them; for going from Island to Island might make them worse." Nevertheless, wherever he disposed of the slaves he must be careful to secure a fixed average, for Captain Spencer, of the Ned, had lately been promised £36 a head for a cargo sold at Dominica, but having omitted to make an agreement with the agent, he had secured only £30 a head, which was a warning to every commander. But there again, the owner reiterated, Captain Doyle would be the best judge.

Captain Doyle read and reflected on the probable outcome of reliance on his rather than Mr. Bostock's judgment. However there was the matter of the puncheons, which had been clearly left to his discretion. He was, however, no more fortunate than Captain Williams. For the Harriot delivered to Mr. Bostock's agent in the West Indies the following letter:

## THE CAPTAINS

Liverpool 4 May 1789.

Dear Sir,

I received yours of 28th March by the Harriot with my Account Current but you have omitted giving me Credit for the Trunk remain'd unsold by the Acct. Curre. sent me. I am sorry to say this adventure has given me enough of West India advene. I apprehend the Puncheons must be in very bad condition as they only sold for £6. 17. 0 and cost here £9. 5. 4. I wish you had not sold them but had let them been in Store for my Own Vessel; I wou'd rather they had been made a fire off.

Robert Bostock's captains traded on the windward coast through his own chosen intermediary—Mr. James Cleveland. There was little scope for their judgment or private enrichment since Mr. Cleveland received almost as detailed instructions from the owner as they. But Robert Bostock found his agent less satisfactory than his captains. The uncertainty of Cleveland's financial transactions were a source of perpetual anxiety to him.

"You must wait Mr. Cleveland's time and not come off without the whole debt," he commands Captain Fryer in June, 1789. "I am surprised you shou'd let him have the whole cargo."

But when the sanguine Cleveland writes suggesting that Captain Bostock recommend African traders to him, he indignantly gives vent to accumulated grievances.

"I wish you would take a little of my advice," he apostrophises the unbusinesslike Cleveland. "That is: not to involve yourself again so much into debt for I am sure you can't be comfortable in your own mind nor no Man that means well. I have had many anxious hours this year, I wou'd not wish the same again for double the Profits I may get if any; you shou'd take it into considera-

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

tion it is a heavy concern upon one person and now everyone knows that you asks well how does your old friend C. do, why, what's the matter, he pays others before you, which makes me look Simple and I don't know what to say, as for my part have always paid the greatest attention to yr Interest, which I believe you are well convinced of."

Captain Bostock regretfully recalling years as master mariner with comfortable commissions, a little profitable private trade, and nothing to lose but his ship.

Many slaver captains retired with small fortunes and no desire to risk their savings or their peace of mind in the Guinea trade. Of these was Captain John Whittle. Whittle was captain of one of Thomas Leyland's ships—the Lottery. In his log of his voyage from Liverpool to Bonny and Kingston in 1798 is a careful copy of his owner's instructions.

These directed him to barter his cargo for choice young and healthy negroes, with all the care and despatch in his power. He was expressly warned to buy no slave over twenty-four years of age, as the cargo was to be sold in Jamaica, where the Assembly had recently imposed a further duty of £10 per head on every imported slave who appeared, in the opinion of the Commissioners, to be over twenty-five.

Captain Whittle was to take especial care to keep company with any armed vessels sailing from Liverpool at the same time as himself, and in like manner when making the Middle Passage, so long as that did not involve delaying his departure from Bonny.

He was further enjoined to maintain the strictest discipline on board, to see that his officers remained sober, and to treat his slaves humanely, so that he might "avoid insurrections and bring them to a market in health, and Spirits."

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The usual arrangements for commission were set forth for the captain and his officers, "in consideration of which emoluments" he was expressly forbidden himself to engage in any private trade, either in slaves or merchandise, or to allow any of the ship's company to do so, under the penalty of forfeiting all his commissions and wages for the voyage.

He kept the complicated accounts of the triple trading in a neat copper-plate hand. There are his lists of trade goods for Africa; casks of beads—"black garnets," "black and blue agates," red and blue "Birdseyes" and "pound beads." There were, too, several crates of crockery, a hundred or more "Felt Hats" and twenty-four "scarlet broadcloth jackets with black velvet cuffs, facings and collars." So much grandeur for eighteen shillings and threepence.

There are the bales of romalls, photaes and long cloth; striped worsted caps and 970 Spanish guns at eleven shillings and sixpence each, and three hundred Bonny Neptunes.<sup>1</sup> He took with him fifty Puncheons containing 5,245 gallons of brandy, which was doubtless intended for the native chiefs' uncritical palates. But John Whittle has a separate list of "6 dozen rich old Mountain & bottles, 6 dozen Lisbon and bottles, and 14½ dozen of Port Wine" with which, perhaps, to regale the more important traders and himself. He fills pages with the ship's stores of pork and beef, bread, rum and flour; candles, butter and salt hams and slops, and enters the cost of a case of medicines as £22. 15. 10 & the "Surgeons' Instrums" at

<sup>1</sup> A Neptune was the name given to a certain cup-shaped formation of coral. A Bonny Neptune was a yellow copper utensil of the same shape, much used for barter on the African Coast. (*Equatorial Africa* (Duchailu, 1867), the *Sailors Word Book* (Smyth, 1867) describes them as large brass pans.



# THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

£3. 10. 10. Captain John Whittle and Richard Maguire the mate were paid £5 a month; John Tebay the Surgeon received six guineas. The two second mates, £6. 6. 0 & £7 respectively and the carpenter £10. A gunner's pay was £5. 10. and that of the boatswain six guineas. The seamen received £4. 15. and the "½ seamen" £3. 10. 0. But Captain Whittle and Richard Maguire and Mr. John Tebay found slaving profitable despite their meagre salaries.

To Cap John Whittle for his Coast Commission on amt Gross Sales	
£41793. 13. 4 at £2 & 102.....	819. 9. 8
„ for his ditto on Sale deducting his Coast Comm Mate & Surgeon's Privilidge &c. £40523. 18. 9½ at £4 & 104.....	1558. 12. 3
To Mr. Richard Maguire Chief Mate for his Privilidge of 2 Slaves on an average of £92. 9. 3¼.....	184. 18. 6½
To John Tebay Surgeon for his Privilege of 2 Slaves on an average of £92. 9. 3¼.....	184. 18. 6½
Head Money on 422 Slaves at 1s 11g.	31. 12. 0½
Gratuity of 30 Gs. allowed him at 32/6 .....	48. 15. 0
To Cash paid the General Receiver Duties on 453 Slaves at 73/4.....	1661. 0. 0
To Wharfrage & Storage on 425 Slaves at 7½d. ....	14. 2. 6
To Advertising &c.....	7. 12. 6½
To Commission on Amount Sales £41793. 13. 4 at 5 p. cent. 2089. 13. 8	6600. 15. 6

Neat Proceeds £35192. 17. 10

Errors Excepted.

#### THE CAPTAINS

are Captain Whittle's entries in Jamaica for December, 1799. He had sold his cargo well. "453 Negroes . . . from Bonny on account of Thomas Leyland, Esq. Liverpool." at £95 each fetched the grand total of £41794. 13. 4.

The unfortunate surgeon, however did not long enjoy his perquisites.

"Funeral Fees for Doctor Tebay..... £5. 15. 5.

Cash paid for a Coffin for do..... 14. 0. 0.

And beneath the imposing total of the profits he writes the brief record of a human tragedy

"1 Negro, Blind—given away."

## CHAPTER V

### JOHN NEWTON

“**J**OHN NEWTON, clerk, once an Infidel and Libertine, A Servant of Slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Saviour—Jesus Christ, Preserved, Restored and Pardoned, And Appointed to preach the Faith He had long laboured to destroy. He ministered here XVI Years as curate and Vicar of Olney in Bucks, And XXVIII, as Rector of these United Parishes. On Feby the First MDCCCL he married Mary, Daughter of the late George Catlett, of Chatham, Kent, whom he Resigned to the Lord who gave Her, on Decr. the XVth MDCCXC.”

Thus runs the epitaph in the church of St. Mary Woolnoth in Lombard Street, of the most remarkable of the slave captains. A Guinea trader who was to become a cleric, the friend of the poet Cowper, the adviser of William Wilberforce.

John Newton was the son of a widowed merchant-captain trading to the Mediterranean. He was a source of great dissatisfaction to his father, who, finally despairing of training him in his ship, consulted his friend Mr. Manesty, a Liverpool merchant, about the rebel's future.

Mr. Manesty offered to send John Newton to Jamaica in one of his ships. Captain Newton was relieved and, pending departure, sent his son to Kent to visit relatives. Possibly to sweeten the unexciting prospect, he told John that he would pass the house of Mr. Catlett, whose first

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wife had been Mrs. Newton's dearest friend. Mr. Catlett, he said, had a young daughter. He suggested a call of courtesy. It was unnecessary, he considered, to mention that the sentimental fantasy of the two mothers had been that son and daughter should wed. Women were given to such personal and pleasant arrangement of the future. It kept them contented, and that life went on its ruthless course regardless of their expectations never seemed to daunt their incurable optimism.

John was seventeen and susceptible. He found Mary Catlett altogether charming. Ardour banished reason; he stayed three weeks instead of days and missed his ship to Jamaica. Mary Catlett was then nearly fourteen years old and, whether due to parental fostering or unusual constancy of youthful affection, she married John Newton eight years later.

It is difficult to understand the favour which Mr. Catlett and his second wife accorded to the suitor. John Newton was hardly a desirable husband for their daughter. He was far from being a satisfactory young man. He had disgusted Mr. Manesty and enraged his father. He had no career and no training beyond the seamanship his father had thrashed into him.

To the sea, therefore, he turned, and engaged as a sailor in a Mediterranean merchantman. He visited Mary Catlett the following year and was apparently well-received, although he ignored any plan Captain Newton made for his future.

John Newton thought himself a fine fellow, well able to care for himself, well able to bully life into according him and his Mary money, means and happiness. But he overestimated his capabilities. A saunter along the quays, a drink; goodwill and optimism rising with rum fumes; a sudden gathering of figures around him; who dared

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jostle John Newton? That was all he remembered of his impressment until he found himself in a tender bound for the man-of-war *Harwich*, lying at the Nore.

He soon found that insubordination in the Navy was not merely dangerous to physical comfort, but dangerous to life. He wrote to his father. Capt. Newton doubtless fostered the traditional enmity of the merchant sailor to the press-gang, but indignation must have been mingled with unavowed relief. War was imminent, John could never have been persuaded to join the Navy. In war time the prospects of a young officer were good. He set to work. Not too hastily, since discipline would do his son no harm. At the end of a month John Newton became a midshipman in his Majesty's Navy.

Relief at escape from the lower deck and its brutality was soon forgotten, however, and the captain's favour forfeited. In 1744, the *Harwich* lay in the Downs bound for the East Indies. John Newton applied for, and was accorded a day's leave. He hired a hack and rode off to visit Mary Catlett. A day's leave! A few hours with Mary, and he was sore and stiff from the ride. A good dinner, a comfortable bed? Why not? He rode back at a good pace. The *Harwich* had sailed. Dirty weather drove her into Plymouth Harbour, however, and there Newton rejoined her. He was reprimanded, but not dismissed his ship.

Five years in the East Indies. Five years of irksome routine, of rigid discipline. Five years away from Mary Catlett. Newton, with the gale still blowing outside, turning over possibilities of escape. News of his father's ship at Torbay decided him. He would try to sign on in a *Guineaman*. Sent ashore with a party of seamen to prevent their desertion, he deserted himself. He knew that he must be careful to avoid recognition. For thirty-six hours

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he walked, ate and slept unmolested. Then, as sense of security grew, he was caught on the Dartmouth road by a detachment of soldiers and marched to Plymouth quay ignominiously guarded. The patience of the captain was at an end; Newton degraded. He raged, despaired, contemplated murder.

The Harwich completed her time in Madeira. She was to sail the following day. John Newton lay brooding in his hammock; he no longer cared for the punishment he would get for late rising. Suddenly the cord of his hammock ran out, landed him with a thud on the planks.

"Get up and dress," shouted a midshipman who had been his friend, "here's your chance."

On deck, mystified, he saw two men putting their bundles into a bobbing boat.

"What is it?" he asked. And was told that two guinea seamen had joined the Harwich and that Sir George Pocock, the commodore, had ordered the captain to send two seamen to replace them.

Here was his chance. He begged the captain to exchange him. The captain, too, must have welcomed the opportunity. John Newton went below to collect his dunnage.

The captain of the Guineaman, a friend of Newton's father, received him kindly. But according to John Newton himself, he had, by this time, lost all sense of decent behaviour. He was, he says, a zealous atheist, an ardent admirer of Lord Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, which he had bought second-hand in a bookseller's in Holland; his "principles ruined."

The Vicar of St. Mary's voice "Let this part of my career be buried in eternal silence." Nevertheless, he recounts how he composed and taught to willing listeners a song "ridiculing the captain, his ship, designs, and

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person." The captain, doubtless, attached less importance than the cleric to this simple form of amusement. Six months later he died on the African coast, and Newton, suspecting that a new captain might return him to the Navy, persuaded an English trader to engage him.

Fortunes, it appeared, were easily made on the African coast. A few puncheons of spirits diluted; false heads put into gun powderkegs; a few yards cut from the middle of the cloth bales, and trading showed a handsome profit.

"Possibly," reflects the Vicar, "I should not have been so completely miserable had I lived among the natives only, but it was my lot to reside with white men, for at that time, several persons of my own colour and language were settled upon that part of the Windward Coast, which lies between Sierra Leon and Cape Mount; for the purpose of purchasing and collecting slaves."

One of the most famous of these was an Englishman. He left England in 1764, a cabin-boy in a slave ship, and became assistant in a slave factory on the Sierra Leone river. He was industrious and ambitious, and after a few years set up a factory of his own north of Sierra Leone. Illiterate, he grew, nevertheless, a rich and expert slave trader. His cruelty was a byword on the coast. He rid himself of his unsaleable slaves by fastening stones to their necks and drowning them in the river during the night. His white servants hated and feared him. One Christmas day an English clerk incurred his displeasure. In drunken fury he ordered his slaves to tie up the European, and gave him four hundred lashes. The white man died a few days later.

"Ormond," wrote a fellow trader, "having caught a black wife of his in a criminal connection with one of his slaves, he tied them together to a tar barrel, set it on fire, and in this manner burnt them both to death."

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But addiction to spirits and the climate of the coast began to have their effect upon Ormond's health. He finally decided to go to the Isles de Los, to the north of Sierra Leone, for sea air and medical attention. He left all his affairs in the hands of his mulatto son. No sooner had he departed than the Bago—a tribe with whom he had adjusted a quarrel by burning one of their villages—descended in a body, attacked and plundered his factory. Ormond's slaves supported the attackers, murdered Ormond's son, burnt, sacked and pillaged. Of thirty thousand pounds' worth of property, nothing remained. Ormond himself died a month after the news was brought to him.

When Newton landed on one of the Banana Islands with his new master, he found his ideas of independence and fortune rudely shattered. He had made no agreement with the trader. He was not, as he foresaw, John Newton, merchant's partner, a man welcomed for his resource, invaluable for his ingenuity, but an unpaid servant—"in effect, a captive and slave."

The trader moved from Cape Mount to the Plaintain Islands, twenty leagues south-east of Sierra Leone.

A low, palm-tufted, sandy islet, surf and wind-worn on the seaward side; remote from larger enterprise. The trader built a house and a trade store; travelled the coast, the river mouths in his shallop piled with goods. He was well received, since a few years earlier, policy not unmixed with inclination, he had taken a negro woman of tribal standing as mistress of his household. With affluence, grown largely through her contriving, grew authority. In Newton she saw, possibly, a threat to her domination. She distrusted and disliked him.

Newton was learning a trader's business; penniless and dependent, he foresaw the time when he would benefit by



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experience gained. But he fell ill with fever soon after his arrival, and the trader sailed for Rio Nuna, leaving him to the negress's care. He lay on a grass mat on the boards, and wrapped his ragged clothes round a log for pillow. The black servants left him water, oily food he could not touch. He was very ill, lay indifferently watching the glaring oblong framed by the doorposts, the hot whiteness, restless with shuttling crabs, shaking, clattering palm-fronds. The fever waxed and waned, left Newton exhausted and helpless. The negress had work for her servants other than caring for an invalid white man. Newton nearly starved. He was too weak to move, lay dependent on her moments of good humour when she would send him the remains of her lavish meal. She found primitive amusement in his weakness, set her slaves mimicking him, pelting him with hard green limes.

With regaining strength came hunger. The bare sands, the locked store house, the vigilant servants? He crept out on dark moonless nights, stole into his master's plantation, pulled and ate whatever roots he could find, and was racked with diahorrea from his injudicious feeding. The slaves pitied him, brought him coconuts or stolen rice. At night too, he would go out on the rocks to wash his one shirt, "and afterwards put it on wet, that it might dry upon my back while I slept."

The trader returned; Newton complained, but recital of his grievances elicited no sympathy. He grew stronger, left the island on a trading voyage, and his master's signs of approbation cheered him. But a fellow-trader asserted that he stole the trade-goods at night and secretly disposed of them. "This was about the only vice of which I was not guilty," he wrote. But protestations were unavailing. He was locked upon the deck and given a pint of rice each day for food. At slack water, he would bait a hook with

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fish entrails thrown to him by the trader, and fish in the muddy estuary. He watched his line eagerly. A fish caught, he voraciously devoured it, broiled or half burnt over the wood fire of the primitive galley. Sometimes he would fish doggedly till the shallop swung round and the driftwood, the rotten coconut husks, were pushed up on the flood, and then go hungry to sleep till the next ebb. It rained; often incessantly for days and nights. Newton, clad in cotton shirt and trousers, a handkerchief knotted round his head, huddled drenched and without shelter. He preferred the gales to come with the rain, he could find slight protection then on the lee side of the small craft.

Two months of the narrow, dirty deck. He knew every splinter, every irregular thickening in the caulking. He was almost glad to see the island again. There, his work sullenly accomplished, at least he could wander freely. With a damp, stained copy of Barrow's *Euclid* under his arm, he would go to the sandspit remotest from the house. He had, in momentary enthusiasm, bought the book at Portsmouth; it was the only one he possessed. He sought refuge from the arbitrary modes of human intercourse in the unalterable order of mathematics.

He stayed till dusk busily drawing with a stick among the balls of sand piled by burrowing crabs. In the night a foam-edged spread of spent waves obliterated the Alexandrian's angles, his incommensurable magnitudes.

Occasionally he would write to Mary Catlett, sending his letters by passing ships. She had become his one constant. He wrote finally to his father, but how much of his misery he told him he does not say. Captain Newton was in Liverpool. He sought his old friend; Mr. Manesty had a ship fitting out for Gambia and Sierra Leone. He told the captain to search for young Newton and, if possible, bring him home.

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Before the captain reached Africa, however, John Newton had, at last, escaped from the island. With his master's consent he took service with another and more prosperous white man who owned several trading posts on the coasts. Newton was made joint manager of a "factory" at Kittam. Well clothed and fed, he regained ambition and initiative; his trading prospered. He tells us that at this period he was in danger of "going native." "I entered," he writes, "upon closer engagements with the natives," but does not explain what these engagements were.

It was February in the year 1747. Newton was anxious to renew his goods before setting out on a trading trip. Out on the shore his white companion saw a merchant-man beating up the coast. The negroes called; a fire kindled and green brush piled to signal the captain. The smoke rising thick and acrid, the ship veering, Newton and the trader awaiting the captain's boat.

The captain's first enquiry was for one, John Newton. By sheer chance, it seemed, Manesty's captain had found the man for whom he had enquired in vain at Sierra Leone and the Banana Islands. But he was confronted by no miserable and homesick outcast, but a self-confident, not over-cordial factory manager. A young man, slightly resentful at the captain's delegated authority to take him to England. Newton had made other plans, he saw for himself an ordered and prosperous future, he told the captain that he had no wish to return.

The captain remembered his owner's instructions. He would undoubtedly incur Mr. Manesty's disapproval should he fail to deliver John Newton in Liverpool. He could not conceal that he had found him. A resourceful man, he created a relative for John Newton. A relative who had died and by whose will John Newton would benefit.

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The captain watched half-incredulous curiosity flickering; the relative took form and shape: an elderly lady standing under the coconut palms between them. "She has left you £400 a year." He could almost see the parchment, the spidery handwriting. Invention no longer embarrassed him, he found circumstantial details flowing off his tongue. But suddenly Mary Catlett stood there too, and John Newton, to the captain's relief, decided to sail with him forthwith.

Within a few hours he was on board the merchantman, characteristically impatient to be in England. The captain, however, had hardly started his trading, and for a year the ship sailed the African coast from Gambia to Cape Lopez, anchoring off villages, in river deltas, answering smoke signals on the shore. Gold, ivory, dyer's wood and beeswax patiently collected, exchanged for cloth and knives, mirrors and muskets.

Newton lounged away the days. Unaccustomed ease, unaccustomed luxury! He talked and drank with the officers, slept the heat away. The ship anchored in the river Gabon. In the moonlight Newton sat on deck with the officers. They drank rum in the steamy heat, and grew lively. Someone suggested a drinking contest, a pink-lined seashell the measure. Rum and Geneva alternately, they decided, and the shell travelled round and round, winding up laughter and action. John Newton got up and capered above his moon-flung shadow. His companions roared encouragement, applause, offered him the dripping shell. His tricorne over one eye, knocked spinning over the side as he lurched into a stay and Newton clambering over in drunken determination to recover it. They dragged him back by the coat-tails, put him protesting to bed—the felt hat slowly turned in the tide, its gold lace catching the moonrays.

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At last the cargo was completed and the ship, after provisioning at Annabona, sailed for home. Seven thousand miles to England. Westward at first towards the Brazilian coast, then a northerly course. Off the Newfoundland Banks the ship ran into storms and hard gales, struggled in heavy seas till her rigging was carried away. John Newton woke to a cabin awash, and the shouting of the officers above the noise of the wind. For twelve days shifts worked ceaselessly at the pumps. Newton lay down worn out from pumping for nine hours. Exhaustion bred indifference, he did not care if he ever rose again. An hour he lay and then he was roused to steer the ship till midnight. Arms aching against the storm's battering, eyes strained to the rearing bows, towering, falling below vision, Newton kept the ship on her course, instinctive action stamped in physical memory, for imposed on the blackness he saw his whole life unroll, himself the evil and worthless protagonist. This, then, was requital. Let judgment overtake him, then, and quickly. But the ship fought on, water kept below danger level in the hold, food almost exhausted. John Newton's penitence persisted; he invoked God and Jesus, prayed hopefully, yet sceptical of prayer's efficacy. But the captain tested Newton new-found piety. Newton, he maintained, was the Jonah. It was he alone who had brought ill-luck to the ship. Day after day he persisted in his reproaches as the ship was driven far out of her course and John Newton found it hard to keep his temper. The scrapings of the meal and meat casks thrown into the pot, the last and smallest water keg broached; but the captain had made Lough Swilley, running before a fresh storm which would certainly have sunk them. They were safe.

Such overwhelming evidence of Divine attention to

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suffering humanity, to his own prayers, completed Newton's conversion. With the thoroughness he brought to all his modes and undertakings, he visited the church twice daily in Londonderry while the ship was refitting, took Communion and "with the utmost solemnity engaged myself to be the Lord's for ever."

In May he arrived in Liverpool, where, sobered by conscience and adversity, he visited Mr. Manesty. The shipowner was either sensible of Newton's metamorphosis, or his kindheartedness once more prevailed. He had a new slave ship, he said, which would be ready to sail in August. Would John Newton voyage in her as mate? Newton said he would, went home to write to Mary Catlett.

"I put the question," he wrote forty years later, "in such a manner, by letter, that she could not possibly avoid (unless I had greatly mistaken her) coming to some sort of explanation. Her answer, though penned with abundance of caution, satisfied me, as I collected from it, that she was free from any other engagement, and not unwilling to wait the event of the voyage I had undertaken."

The lover who hired a horse and galloped all day for a few hours of his lady's company, proposing an "explanation" by letter! Mary Catlett debated the change, returned correctness with caution. Or did the dust of forty years blur outline till viewed uncertainty conformed to the elderly eye of convention?

As mate of the slaver, John Newton was in charge of the "boating" parties. From Sierra Leone, where he left the ship, he sailed in the longboat from river to river buying slaves. By this time religious fervour had been superseded by a classical thirst. Ever bold, Newton began his studies with Horace, a second-hand version with a translation, and a Latin Bible. He had forgotten

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to include a dictionary, and spent hours searching for, and comparing familiar words. His slaving expedition could hardly have been conducive to study.

"Though we have been here six months, I have not been ten days in the ship," he wrote to a friend, "being continually cruising about in the boats to purchase souls . . . sometimes venturing in a little canoe through seas like mountains, sometimes travelling through woods, often in danger from the wild beasts, and much oftener from the more wild inhabitants."

Six of his sailors died of fever; news filtered through to him of the murder of other "boating" parties; but he returned safely to Sierra Leone and the ship sailed for Antigua. The slaves sold; a visit to Charleston where Newton inexplicably "sang hymns in the woods by day" and at night caroused with "vain and worthless company;" and he was back in Liverpool by December 1749.

In the following February he married Mary Catlett at Chatham. He left no description of his wedding, no account of honeymoon or home. Six months later he was appointed captain of the Duke of Argyle and sailed for the African coast.

The captain initiated services each Sunday, himself officiating. In his cabin, Livy, Caesar and Sallust were supported by a Latin dictionary. He anchored off the Plantains, surveyed his old home curiously. Was the negress still there? Told that she was, he sent the longboat ashore with a message to invite her to come on board. Newton watched the longboat put off from the shore, Through his glass he saw the well-nourished negress with her European finery billowing over the stern sheets. It was she, his tormentress. He gave orders; and his former employer's mistress arrived at last, moist and panting

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on the deck. A salvo of gunfire shot whistling over her head, smoke blinding her, and beyond the smoke Captain Newton suavely explaining that such a reunion must needs be fittingly celebrated.

"I desired the men to fire guns over her head in honour of her, because she had done me so much good, though she did not mean it," he explained. . . . "I have had several occasions of taking the noblest kind of revenge upon persons who once despised and used me ill."

Captain Newton heaping cannon-balls instead of coals. The negress, however, wished that he had welcomed her less cordially. From the authority of his own deck Newton played patron, gave her presents and dismissed her.

It had been well worth returning to the Plantains.

He sailed for Antigua with his cargo of slaves, and twice more returned to the African coast as captain of a slaving ship. The officers and crew of Captain Newton's ship were now obliged to attend two services each Sunday. The captain himself rose at four o'clock in the morning and after asking a blessing on the day would take a "serious walk on deck." Bible reading followed. At eleven o'clock the ship's bell ringing, the seamen collecting; Matins read to the clattering of slave-chains. In the afternoon another service, a scripture lesson and private devotion. And withal Newton had neither doubt nor scruple as to the morality of his enterprise. It never occurred to him to apply religious principles to analysis of his employment. "Custom, example and interest had blinded my eyes. What I did, I did ignorantly; considering it as the line of life which Divine Providence had allotted me," was his subsequent self-vindication, adding that the slave trade was accounted a genteel as well as profitable employment. Indeed he ascribed to Divine Providence the hopeless



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apathy which succeeded his slaves desperate and unsuccessful attempts to rise against their captors. Hopelessness, he interpreted as peaceable change of heart, brought about by the God of Peace.

He returned from his last voyage in August 1754, and returned thanks in the churches for a favourable passage and the "comfortable sense of the presence of God through the whole."

Newton had not lost any of his slaves or his crew, and this was regarded as so extraordinary that when he first appeared upon Exchange he was warmly congratulated by all the merchants on his phenomenal good fortune. He did not see behind congratulation the shadow of terrible indictment, for he planned to sail again the following November. Illness, however, forced him to relinquish his appointment. He now considered that the Lord had answered his recent prayers and was now "pleased to fix him in a more humane calling," which offered itself in the post of tide surveyor of Liverpool. He and his wife lived comfortably in Edmund Street, and in 1756 he sent a printed copy of his *Thoughts on Religious Associations* to every minister of religion in the city.

Three years later, somewhat tardily, he recalled his mother's wish that he should enter the Ministry. Naively he remarks that he "seemed selected to show what the Lord could do." The Archbishop of York, however, whom he approached the following year, failed to see the slave captain—tide surveyor as manifestation of Divine omnipotence, and through his secretary tactfully refused his assistance to the aspiring cleric. Nevertheless Newton persisted. He preached fervently if haltingly in dissenting chapels and prosecuted his search for a patron who would help him to become a priest. Finally, after many rebuffs, the Bishop of Lincoln offered him a curacy





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in his diocese, and in May 1764 he was admitted to deacon's orders; in June he was ordained priest, and left Liverpool with his wife for the spired church, the poplars and water meadows of Olney.

For seventeen years Newton lived there as curate. He became an intimate friend of Cowper's, who had become as nearly ironical as one so gentle could be, in his poem, *Pity the Poor Africans*, which he directed against the smug sophistry of the slave traders. Together he and Cowper composed the *Olney Hymns*.

From Olney Newton was appointed to the City church of St. Mary Woolnoth. He wrote and preached for the Abolitionists; he supplied Clarkson with information and data for his arguments, and he encouraged Wilberforce. "Called at Newton's, and bitterly moved me," runs an entry in Wilberforce's diary. In 1787, Newton published his *Thoughts on the African Slave Trade*. With an integrity which many of the ardent Abolitionists might well have imitated, he sought to give an honest and unbiased account. "I am aware that what I have seen, and what only heard related, may by this time have become so insensibly blended together, that in some cases, it may be difficult for me to distinguish them with absolute certainty. It is however my earnest desire . . . that I may offer nothing in writing, as from my own knowledge, which I could not cheerfully, if requisite confirm on oath."

John Newton, at eighty-three, weak and confined to his room, grown wise and, more tolerant; the old slave captain hopefully awaiting the passing of the Bill for the abolition of the trade. He lived to see the Bill made law and felt his life-circle to be complete.

"I am packed, and sealed and waiting for the post." Thus the old African Blasphemer, as he liked to call himself, welcomed death.

## CHAPTER VI

### MUTINIES, PRIVATEERS AND PIRATES

THE captain of a slave ship could never relax his vigilance. From the hour he left the Mersey until his return to Liverpool he was on the alert. He had to be prepared, not only for pirates and, in war time, the French privateers and men-of-war, but also for the insubordination of his own crew. The Guinea seamen were hard-bitten, tempered by danger and brutality; frequently they were criminals who had chosen the African ships as the only alternative to prison. In 1775, two thousand of them rioted in Liverpool in protest at the imprisonment of some of their fellows. The *Derby*, a Guineaman, was refitting in the docks. The seamen finished rigging her and went off to receive their contracted wages of thirty shillings a month. But the owners demurred; ships were laid up; there were three thousand unemployed sailors; trade was not prospering under the threat of war with America; twenty shillings was all they could afford to pay. The enraged seamen backed out of the counting-house, threatening reprisal. They returned to the *Derby* and left the new hemp ropes, the tarred ratlines, the canvas in slashed heaps on her decks. The leaders were arrested by the constables and shut up in Liverpool Tower, whereupon two thousand seamen crowded the docks with marline-spikes, clubs, iron bars and cutlasses. They unrigged

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every vessel that was ready to sail; they terrorised the innkeepers and, indignation lashed with rum, they broke into the gaol and rescued their companions. They surged up Castle Street, looting houses and shops.

The merchants finally agreed to the sailors' demands, but decided to establish their security with "three hundred able-bodied men" to deal with the most dangerous of the rioters. But the seamen heard of their intention and demonstrated, angry but unarmed, in front of the Exchange. A pane of glass shattered; the hired three hundred shooting; seven seamen killed. Pandemonium broke loose again. The sailors marched to John Parr, the gunsmith in Frederick Street, and looted his muskets. They brought up cannon from a ship in Old Dock and bombarded the Exchange with cannon-ball and shot. The houses of Castle Street shook, the windows shed a hail of glass slivers. "The merchants," they cried, and marched to Whitechapel. They wrecked the house of Thomas Radcliffe, flung his furniture from the windows, fought, shot and swore in clouds of goose feathers from the merchant's bed and marched on to the mansion of Mr. William James in Rainford Garden. Mr. James had anticipated trouble and fled to the country with his family and servants, and such valuables as he could carry. With the less treasured household chattels which he had left behind him was his little negro pageboy. The rioters, searching the house for hidden valuables, found him shivering with fear in the grandfather clock. Enterprise was stimulated by the contents of Mr. James's well-stocked cellar and the seamen went on to wreck the houses of every merchant who had held out for lowering their wage.

The Mayor had the Riot Act read; sent a post-boy galloping to Manchester with a demand for assistance.

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Three more seamen were killed, and the following morning, in the pouring rain, there clattered into Liverpool a detachment of the First Royal Regiment of Dragoons, and the sweating merchants resumed their dignity and their determination.

The rioters were imprisoned and fourteen of the ring-leaders were "suffered to go on board one of His Majesty's ships destined for America."

Such were the Guinea seamen.

In the log of the brig *Ranger*, Captain Corran, bound for Anamboe, is the following entry:

"Sunday, 31st January, 1790.

"The first part of these 24 hours light Breezes and clear Weather. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 4 P M Mr. Christian Freeze bestowed illiberal and mutinous language to Mr. Woods the second Mate upon which the captain, overhearing the Conversation between them, desired said Freeze to desist in those Proceedings to the Officers of the Vessel upon which orders he and the said Freeze gave the Captn. of the said vessel abusive and ill language. It appeared upon investigation that the said Christian Freeze and one George Hall, another seaman belonging to the said Brig had been employed in the Hold in assisting the said Mr. Woods but he being obliged to leave them in the hold they thereby taking advantage of his Absence, embezzled part of the cargo of Rum that lay in the hold whereby they became intoxicated and for the ill conduct and drunkenness of the said Freeze and intoxication of the said George Hall, their allowance of Rum was (by the desire of the Captn.) ordered not to be given to them until the Expiration of eight days as a punishment for their behaviour above expressed."

Captain Corran had hardly begun slaving, his ship could ill afford more serious trouble with his people. By

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the end of the month he had bought only five slaves. The crew had little to do but stitch sails and fetch water from the shore. The daily rum allowance did not suffice long hot hours at anchor.

“... At 2 p.m.” runs the log entry for 19th February, “Daniel Chieves behaved in a mutinous manner to Mr. Woods the 2nd Mate, and all the People on Board are charged (by the confession of the boatswain) for making away and embezzling the Cargo of Liquor on Board the Brig—And on Monday last some or one of the Officers or People broke into the Hold and broached a Puncheon of Brandy which lay therein by boring a Hole with a Gimblet and thereby drew off a quantity of the Liquor.”

But this time Captain Corran showed no leniency. He set out early the following morning for Cape Coast “to make a Complaint to the Commodore against the People for breaking into the Hold and embezzled a part of the Cargo of rum. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 11 the Captn. returned with the orders from the Commodore that he might put on Board of his Ship the supposed ringleaders and mutineers.”

And on 22nd February:

“At 2 P.M. the Commodore hove to abreast of Annamaboe Roads and Captn. Corran having a great suspicion against Sampson Thurston and Daniel Chieves being the two ringleaders of the said People breaking into the said Hold and the only Persons that bestowed a great deal of mutinous language upon Mr. Woods the second Mate, therefore Captain Corran for the safety of the Vessel and Cargo put the aforesaid Sampson Thurston and Daniel Chieves on Board the Commodore.”

Captain Corran had no more trouble with the crew until he reached the West Indies, where:



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"George Hall, James Haselden, Robert Pattison and Jno. Palmer went upon duty ashore, in the Boat and declined to return to the Brig, saying that they did not approve of Mr. Woods' second Mate's conduct towards them and for that reason were resolved to quit the vessel."

But mutinous seamen were not always so easily dealt with. The crew of the *Bella*, two days out from Jamaica on her way to Liverpool, planned to capture the ship. They surprised and murdered the chief mate and left Captain Burgess and two loyal seamen on the Jordans—a small rocky island. But, hailed by the *Harlequin*, another Liverpool ship homeward bound, the mutineers were discovered and the *Bella* retaken.

The Guinea seamen, however, often had legitimate grievances. On the African coast, where the ships would lie sometimes for many weeks, the sailors slept on deck under old tarpaulins thrown across the booms. The heat was often intolerable and when the heavy tropical rains seeped through the awnings the men, ignorant or indifferent, would welcome the heat's respite and lie on the wet decks until half of them were ill with fever. In many of the ships no rum or grog was issued and the seamen would trade their clothing to the negroes for brandy. When they could get no spirits they drank water from the mainland which frequently gave them dysentery.

Captain Knox, who had commanded Guineamen for several years, maintained that in his passage to Africa he never restricted the men in provisions, but that on the coast he was obliged to put them on allowance "to prevent embezzlement with the natives." They received 1 lb. of beef, 1 lb. of bread and half a pint of flour; peas or oatmeal each day. He stoutly denied that his men were ever stinted of water. He generally issued flour twice a week, peas "as long as good," (in the moist, tropical

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climate they soon deteriorated), oatmeal for breakfast and butter occasionally. His crew were given a dram of spirits each morning. "The continuance of this allowance through the Middle Passage, will depend on the length of purchase."

In the slaving ships rations were not always so generous and, if the Middle Passage were prolonged through unfavourable weather, often reduced to a minimum.

The *Venus*, Captain Smith, trading to Fernando Po, refused to issue plantains to the seamen, and since many of them already had dysentery, he was taking a wise precaution, which, however, his hungry crew did not appreciate. They might have been less critical had the Captain provided them with a substitute diet. Rations were very short, at Annabona, all they had been given of local produce was a few coconuts and some cassada flour. The mate suggested that, since there was no deck space where the stringy but plentiful native chicken could be stored, that coops should be lashed to the ship's side, and thus nourishment carried for the sick men, but Captain Smith would have none of it. On that voyage, besides many seamen, all the officers of the *Venus* died except the Chief Mate and Captain Smith himself.

Many young sailors were brutalized by the treatment they received and, when they revolted, dealt with their officers as they themselves had been dealt with. Alexander Falconbridge, from his own experience, told how a sailor who had complained to an officer of a lack of drinking water, had received a blow on the mouth which knocked out his teeth. The officer then had him tied to a rail of the quarterdeck, since in his misery he threatened to drown himself, and later he was dragged under the half-deck, where he spent the night fastened to the grating companion of the steerage.

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Another young sailor Falconbridge had known had been flogged with the cat-o'-nine-tails for every trivial offence until, beyond further endurance, he had jumped from the ship's side into the Bonny river. But he was not allowed to die, and hauled on board, he was taken to the mate on the quarterdeck.

"If you want drowning, I'll drown you myself," said he, and held down the boy's head in a bucket of water in which the negro women washed, until, in fact, he had nearly drowned him.

There is record of a seaman flogged raw for some venial offence, who had pepper and salt rubbed into the bloody pulp of his back.

There is the terrible tale of which Falconbridge saw the beginning in Bonny river and of which he heard the end in Bristol. The captain and officers of a slaver returned to their ship late one night after a carousal with the black slave traders of Bonny. They had drunk themselves pugnacious and commanded a flogging for all the seamen. Twelve of the seamen who were not too exhausted by the beating, resolved to escape forthwith. They cut the network on the main deck—built to prevent the slaves from jumping overboard—and lowered the long boat. A few hours later the watch reported the hole in the pallisade, the loss of the long boat. The Captain himself put off in the cutter to search for the missing men. He never found them.

The sailors dropped silently down Bonny river in the darkness. They planned to make for Old Calabar. For provisions they had only half a hundredweight of bread in a sack and half a small cheese. In the boat was a cask with, they reckoned, about thirty-eight gallons of water in it. They kept as close as they dared to the coast. On an oar they had rigged a sail made from a hammock. The

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long unbroken line of surf, the mangrove swamps, and the river mouth beyond the rough water of the bar. But it was not Calabar river! They recognised their mistake too late. They had landed only to be seized by unfriendly negroes, stripped and marched across country they knew not where. For days they were driven on, most of them were ill, some died and their bodies were left to rot by the path. At last the wretched survivors saw the sea again. Old Calabar, and a slaver lying at anchor. She was the *Lyon*, Captain Burrows, and the negroes sold their prisoners to the English captain. But nine had died on the coast and during the Middle Passage, and it was one of the two survivors, a seaman called Sermon, who told Falconbridge the rest of their story in Bristol infirmary.

Yet with all its brutality, its sickness and its risks, the Guinea trade never lacked volunteers. Many men were ignorant of conditions, of tropical climates, and tropical diseases, many more were drawn by the inducement of a month's pay in advance, and by the time they had drunk it away were prepared to face anything. Many of them were illiterate but, had they been able to read, they may quite well have discounted the significance of a clause which "restrained sailors under forfeiture of their wages, from applying, in case of ill-usage, to anyone for redress except to such persons as are nominated by the owners or the captain."

Successful mutineers turned pirate, although their ventures usually ended in capture by white men or black.

In 1752, Liverpool seamen from the *Three Sisters* who had gone off with the long boat and turned pirate, boarded the *Clayton*, a snow<sup>1</sup> from Liverpool, off

<sup>1</sup> A snow was a square-sterned vessel, fully rigged on both masts, of approximately 140 tons with a 21 ft. beam; 5 ft. between the decks and 9 ft. in the hold.

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Fernando Po. Unseen they approached under the Clayton's lee quarter. All hands were forward except the captain and the gunner, who had no time for the elaborate preparation of his swivel guns. Captain Patrick fought until he was wounded and the pirates put him and the crew in irons. But a ship's crew in irons was of little use, and the pirates became persuasive. They brought bales of fine red cloth aboard and silk handkerchiefs, and promised scarlet coats and fortune to such as would join them. Four of the Clayton's crew were won forthwith, and the Chief Mate, when persuasion failed, was impressed to navigate the Clayton to Pernambuco. The rest were turned adrift in the ship's boat. In Pernambuco a Portuguese man-of-war retook the Clayton pirates, red cloth and all.

During the eighteenth century fighting the French became habitual. The French and English privateers roved and fought and, after a few years peace, set out to rove and fight again. Liverpool lost many of her finest Guineamen, and often her cargoes of slaves as well.

From Anna Maria Falconbridge's account, the crews of the French privateers were no less formidable than pirates. "The Orpheus came out to protect the British trade on this part of the coast . . ." she writes to a friend from Sierra Leone in 1793, "as did the Sea-flower, in some measure; but she is only to run down the Coast, and proceed to the West Indies. After remaining here a few days they both went to leeward, unfortunately three or four days too late, or they would have intercepted a French Corsair that has scoured the coast from Cape Mount (about fifty leagues from hence) downwards, considerably annoyed our trade, and taken eight valuable ships clear away, it is supposed to Cayenne; she had captured many more, which have been retaken by the Sea-flower

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and Robust (A Privateer from Liverpool); these two vessels, we hear, have consorted and gone to Old Calabar, where they expect to fall in with and take a large French Guineaman, that has twelve hundred slaves on board, and is just ready to sail.

“One of the ships they recaptured was sent in here. I have seen the master of her, who says he never saw such a savage looking set in his life, as were on board the Frenchman. They all had on horsemen’s caps (having a tin plate in front, with the emblem of *Death’s head and marrow bones* and underneath inscribed, ‘Liberty, or Death’), a leather belt round their waists, with a brace of pistols, and a sabre; and they looked so dreadfully ferocious, that one would suppose them capable of eating every Englishman they met with, *without salt or gravy*.”

During the Seven Years War, the Liverpool snow Betty, Captain William Creevey, sailed under escort for Gambia. But in a gale she lost the naval convoy and Captain Creevey sailed on alone and apprehensive.

“After we got as far as Lat. 39 and Long. 17. I thought we were entirely out of danger,” he wrote to his owners, “but to my inexpressible mortification, we fell in with a fleet of French Indiamen outward bound, escorted by the Fortune of 64 guns and 360 men. We were taken by one of their best sailing frigates, who sank your snow Betty, with the greatest part of her cargo.”

If an English slaver encountered an enemy ship on her way to the West Indies she would occasionally arm the most trustworthy of her negro captives to reinforce the ship’s crew.

When Mr. Aspinall’s ship, the Will, was attacked by a French privateer near Tobago, Captain Crow found a young slave he had trained as a gunner, to be both “courageous and expert.”

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Of his precautions in the Middle Passage during the Napoleonic wars when he was commanding the *Mary*, he writes "It was my constant practice to keep the ship in a state of readiness to receive any enemy we might chance to meet, and particularly near the coast of Cayenne, which I had learned, by dearly bought experience, was infested by French cruisers. To this end my crew were frequently trained to work the great guns, [the *Mary* carried long nine-pounders on the main deck, and fourteen eighteen-pound carronades on the quarter deck] and small arms; on the present voyage I selected several of the finest of the black men to join them in these exercises, as well as passing along the powder and other minor duties that might become requisite in the hour of action. The blacks, who were very proud of the preferment, were each provided with a pair of light trousers, shirt and a cap, and many were the diverting scenes we witnessed, when they were in a morning eagerly employed in practising firing at empty bottles, slung from the ends of yard-arms. . . . The first who struck a bottle was presented with a dram and a new cap."

But the captains were chary of armed negroes. Too often ships had been captured by slaves, officers and crew murdered. Who could tell if the muskets might not be turned against the English instead of the French? The slaves were closely watched, sentries posted day and night. Guns covered the waist of the ship, the foc'sle and quarter-deck were barricaded. In spite of these precautions slave-risings were far from infrequent. Before the rigours of the Middle Passage drained strength and hope, before the African coast had fallen below the horizon, the slaves desperately seized the smallest opportunity of escape, considering little the ultimate possibility of success.

"The negroes rose on us after we left St. Thomas's;"

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wrote Captain Harrison of the Liverpool ship *Rainbow*, "they killed my linguister whom I got in Benin, and we then secured them without farther loss."

Secured by the thumbs; hung from the boom; flogged into submission or made to jump overboard. Fear spurring brutality. The white men were many times outnumbered by their cargoes of slaves and they knew that they could expect no mercy from them.

The negroes who had been sold for criminal offences were men of initiative. They were the leaders of those of their compatriots who lacked the courage but not the will to escape.

In 1806, the *Bolton*, a Liverpool ship lying in Bonny river, had taken 120 slaves aboard. During the purchase of slaves vigilance perforce was relaxed. There was the coming and going of native brokers; the parties of seamen on shore leave; the Bonny notables. The slaves watched, they saw officers and men returning relaxed with liquor, in no condition to resist concerted attack. They rose, and killed those of the officers and crew who did not escape in the boats. There were other slave ships lying at anchor in the river. The negroes rightly anticipated that the dispossessed ship's company would enlist the help of their fellow countrymen. To deter boarding parties they opened the casks of trade gunpowder and strewed it prodigally between decks. A few of the negroes, alarmed, swam ashore and told the tale. The *Bolton* lay above the other ships, and the English captains, humanity stimulated by anxiety for their own safety, held counsel together. Captain Hugh Crow was of their number. He proposed that they should board the *Bolton*, try to convince the negroes of their danger. Crow was well-known at Bonny, and popular. A few of the slaves were Bonny men and they listened to him. They



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left the Bolton and were accommodated in the other Guineamen. But the Quaw negroes were obstinate and sullen, heeding no warning, or, maybe, prizing their freedom above their lives. The captains were rowed back to their ships, cursing the folly of the men they had endeavoured to save. The following afternoon they saw flicker of fire on the Bolton's deck. They ordered the boats manned, but they knew, as they did so, that nothing could save the mutineers. They watched a spurt of flame bursting from the Bolton's side; a roar; acrid, pungent smoke and a hail of fragments. When the smoke cleared there was the hulk of the Bolton above a scum of floating wreckage, bodies and trade goods. Not a negro had escaped.

In 1773 the Bristol ship *Narborough* put out from Bonny with a cargo of slaves. The captain ordered some of the men to be unshackled and help with the ship's duties. The small-arms chest was either left unlocked or a negro stole the key. With firearms they dealt with the white men mercilessly—massacring all but a few whom they commanded to take the ship to Bonny. The fate of the returned negroes is unrecorded, but it may well be that they were recaptured by their fellow countrymen and sold again as were those of whom Jerome Weuves—a fort Governor of the Gold Coast—spoke, in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee.

The negligence of the armourer of the Liverpool ship *Thomas* cost the lives of her captain—Peter M'Quie—and most of her crew. It was the women slaves who, going unchained about the decks, discovered the open arms chest. The crew were below eating their breakfast. Stealthily two slim girls slipped into the open hatchway and passed cutlasses, muskets and pistols through the bulkheads to their menfolk.

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Two hundred armed and murderous blacks, running up the forescuttles, the seamen cut off, fighting desperately with cutlasses, with bare fists. The captain killed, the sailors overpowered and hacked to pieces, the slaves in possession. In the distance twelve seamen rowing away desperately in the stern boat. The terrorised remnant steering the ship back to Africa flanked by black guards. Four more seamen and the long boat missing. Day after day the boatswain and the remaining seamen sailed back towards Africa, watching for the sail of approaching Guineamen. On the forty-second day they sighted an American brig, and at their desperate signals she hove to and came alongside the blood-stained, reeking Thomas. But the negroes, confident with success, seized muskets and cutlasses and leapt aboard her. The crew ran for the boats, jumped for their lives and left the negroes in possession of the ship. The slaves broke open the hold. The brig was carrying rum; the negroes broached the big-bellied puncheons. Never had they imagined so much rum. They crowded into the brig and drank, and the boatswain and four seamen watched. They were immeasurably outnumbered but they were desperate men. In a few hours most of the negroes had drunk themselves insensible—most of them, but not enough; for the boatswain, fighting with M'Quie's cutlass, was killed before the four seamen retook the brig. They sailed her to Long Island, Providence, and the Thomas was subsequently recaptured by an English frigate—the Thames. Of the twelve men who escaped in the stern boat only two had arrived in Loango, but those in the long boat reached the Bahamas after six nights and days without water.

The Liverpool snow Perfect was captured by slaves as she lay at anchor off Mana. Henry Harrison, described

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the mutiny in a letter to his relatives dated *The Plantains*, 23rd April, 1759.

"On the 12th of January, we had the misfortune to be cut off by the negroes; they killed Captain Potter, our surgeon, carpenter, cooper, and James Steward, a boy. Luckily, the captain had sent me on shore that morning to go to the King's town, about ten miles up the river, to fetch slaves down; but before I reached the town, met two of his servants bringing a slave down; returned with them; made a smoke on the shore as a signal for our boat, but before had well made it, saw her put off from the vessel with six of our people in her, being all left alive on board. I swam off to her and we rode for the *Spencer*, Captain Daniel Cooke, then lying at Cape Mount. At one o'clock that night, Captain Cooke got under way, and made sail in order to attempt to recover our vessel; at daylight, finding her at anchor, we fired guns into her for about an hour, but I could not persuade him to board her. That evening the slaves ran the snow on shore. We had purchased 103 slaves, and had a pledge for two more on board. The slaves and natives would not give us the least article of wearing apparel. When this fatal accident happened, our chief mate was gone with the yawl to windward, and the boatswain with the long-boat to leeward to purchase slaves. Mr. Eaton and the boatswain got on board Captain Nichols, and I heard that they saved 15 or 16 slaves that were due to us on shore, and left *Mana*, Mar. 30, designed for the West Indies."

And yet, despite mutinies and pirates, Frenchmen and slave risings, the fortunes of the Liverpool merchants grew. They built more ships and bought more slaves, and they never lacked captains and officers for their slavers.

The captains of the Guineamen were not all either

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vicious or brutal to their crews and their slaves. The greater number of them were brave and honest men. The conditions of life at sea in the eighteenth century bred callousness—a callousness not only to the sufferings of others, but to personal danger and hardship. Thus the men of the Merchant Service, while they left some records of cruelty and tyranny, built up an unparalleled history of persistent and intrepid seafaring. In their small sailing ships they disregarded personal comfort and safety because storms, pirates, privateers, enemy men-of-war, lack of food and water were the natural concomitants of a sailor's life. But in the slave ship there was another element—Fear, and the echo of Horace *Hic niger est—hunc tu Romane caveto*.

The officers and crews of the Guinea ships were fifty, a hundred times outnumbered by the negroes they carried. They knew of the ships' crews who had been massacred, they had seen the free African warriors, the human sacrifices at the death of kings. They carried strong, resentful captives. Their authority must be unquestioned. To enforce authority, to burn consciousness of white omnipotence into the negro mind they used the only weapon in their limited armoury—physical force; and constant subconscious fear turned discipline to cruelty.

When considering the treatment accorded to slaves in the Guineamen, it must be borne in mind that, judged by the standards of the age, the average slaver captain was regarded—and considered himself—as no more inhumane than did the captains of the convict ships, the governors of civil prisons, or the bear-baiters of Liverpool polling days.

We are apt to deplore our lack of social progress—to suspect a moral retrogression proportionate to scientific

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advance. We see the evils and abuses of industrialisation, of bloated competitive vested interests; the need for drastic and immediate reform of redistribution. And in doing so it is easy to lose sight of receding centuries. But, if social progress can be regarded as the improvement of the general standard of life, the development of national consciousness, the awareness and wider assumption of social responsibility, we must admit, in these respects, that we have progressed.

We are charged as a nation with hypocrisy, and sometimes we indeed merit the charge. But at least we no longer flaunt our famous Freedom against a background of black slaves.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GUINEA COAST

**A**S soon as the slave ships sighted the coast of Africa preparations were started for the reception of "the involuntary black emigrants," as Captain Crow termed them.

"Friday 15 January begins with light winds and hazey" runs the log of the *Ranger*, off Grand Bassan. "Carpenter fitting the Barricado."

The crew bringing up inch boards of deal, piling them near the main mast for the partition behind which the slaves will be segregated. Eight foot high and solid, projecting well over the ship's sides; a stout door in the planking, and apertures for cannon and blunderbuss muzzles.

The *Ranger* was bound for Anamboe on the Gold Coast. Ships trading to the Gold Coast anchored from two to three miles from the shore. The rocky surf-bound coast offered no harbour or river mouth. "Most of the landings at the forts are very dangerous from the surf," reported the commander of Cape Coast Castle, and indeed at Anamboe it had taken English and natives a month to accomplish the safe landing of four six-pounder cannon for the fort. The negroes in their sharp light canoes breasted the great rollers with amazing dexterity, but to manipulate a bulky catamaran even on the swift beachward flow was difficult and hazardous. The captains knew of no navigable river on the Gold Coast, save

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the narrow stream at Chama, where the Dutch had settled, and so they rode at anchor in the open sea, visiting the shore for trade, and receiving the black traders with their merchandize on board. Although the crews preferred Bonny or Calabar, where the ships crossed the rough waters of the bar, lay snugly in the river, and they could go ashore after the weeks afloat, to drink, trade, and pursue the negresses; the Captains tolerated the inconvenience of open anchorage, the leaping canoe journeys to and from the ship, when they and the trade goods were often soaked with salt water, in the knowledge that there was far less danger of losing their people by malaria, dysentery and typhoid. Less danger, too, of drunken quarrels and antagonised natives. "The article of Women," wrote John Newton, "likewise, contributes largely to the loss of our Seamen. When they are on shore they often involve themselves on this account, in quarrels with the natives and, if not killed upon the spot, are frequently poisoned."

But the crews of the Bonny and Calabar ships had plenty of work to do before they were allowed ashore. At Bonny the ships anchored a mile below the cluster of mud-walled straw-thatched dwellings dignified by the title of town, in seven or eight fathoms of water. After the sailors had unbent the sails, struck the yards and top masts, they started to build the "house"—and enclosure destined to protect them from sun and rain and also to prevent the slaves from jumping overboard.

Swearing and sweating they lashed the booms and yards from mast to mast to make the ridge pole of the "house," brought spars of the same length to lash to the standing rigging and form a "wall-plate." More spar-rafters laid and lashed across the ridge-pole, laid and lashed lengthwise to form a lattice. Sturdy walls of trel-

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lised sticks, and a roofing of rush matting fastened with rope yarn. They made two doors in the lattice, one by the ship's ladder, the other by which they could reach the fo'c'sle. In the roof was a trap door by which water casks were hoisted in and out.

And while they were working the Captain would go ashore to announce his arrival and enquire the state of trade. With a guard of sailors and his linguister the Captain would make his way through the roughly aligned red mud huts, through children and chicken and clouds of green wood smoke—which the natives lit on the sand floors against mosquitoes and sandflies—to visit the headmen.

The houses of the Kings of Bonny were mud-plastered and sand-floored and only differed from those of their subjects in size. Round them were grouped store-houses for European trade goods.

Kings and Captain would exchange courtesies and the chiefs would be formally invited to come aboard, where, before breaking bulk, the Captain made them presents—known as “dashes”—from his cargo. Cloth, handkerchiefs, brandy, wine and beer.

But the kings were business men. They took the Captain's cloth and handkerchiefs, and drank his brandy, but they stationed their customs servants aboard to count the slaves received and to collect the export duty payable on them. The “officer-boys” stayed on board till the ship had finished slaving. There were presents too, to be sent to the self-styled “Parliament-gentlemen”—the Chief's councillors. The gifts were traditional ones of bread and beef. Liquor, the Parliament Gentlemen received whenever they went aboard a ship. This too, was customary, and the councillors, to the depletion of the Captain's brandy puncheons, paid frequent visits, announcing



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their arrival by blasts from an elephant-tusk trumpet. At Anamboe the town elders came aboard to collect the customs dues, and their own presents. On their departure three, five or seven guns were fired and the ensign hoisted—a signal to the black slave brokers that the ship was ready to trade.

The Kings would give their sanction to trade with the negro slave dealers and leave with gun salutes and gifts.

The African kings usually received the captains hospitably and the captains appear to have conformed to African custom and courtesy, in a manner, which albeit hardly disinterested, was praiseworthy. Native chief and slaver captain were both, doubtless, content in the assured feeling of the superiority they both felt.

King Jabrue of Calabar had been much puzzled by Captain Snelgrave's God.

"All white men a rogues." King Naimbana voiced the opinion of the African coast. But cautiously dealt with they were worth encouraging. To sell a prisoner was more advantageous than merely sacrificing him. The white men evidently disapproved of ritual sacrifice. They too, had gods but their creed seemed confused and arbitrary in application.

Captain Snelgrave came to Calabar to buy slaves and Jabrue received him sitting on a stool under the trees surrounded by his warriors. He had a guard of seamen and an interpreter who explained that the white man wished to trade and had brought presents as token of goodwill. The presents were eminently satisfactory. But the Captain had then turned his attention to the two priests who stood guard over an infant which was to be sacrificed to propitiate the god Egbo that night.

Far from being content at this explanation he and his men had tried to seize the child and the warriors inter-

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vened. The Captain had accused Jabrue of breaking the laws of hospitality, to which he had countered that the child was, after all, his own property.

The Captain then explained that although his religion "did not allow of forcibly taking away what belonged to another, it yet expressly forbad so horrid a thing as putting a poor innocent Child to death. And that it would, instead of blessings, certainly bring on him the wrath of the most high God whom the white men adored," and went on to make the extraordinary statement that this God had made a Grand Law which was "to do unto others as we desired to be done to."

Evidently the white man had the same poor opinion of this God since he certainly could not wish to be shackled and branded and taken away to perpetual slavery.

Jabrue had finally tired of the conversation and sold the child for a bunch of fine sky-blue beads. There were plenty more for Egbo.

Captain Crow was good friends with both King Pepple and King Holiday, the joint Chiefs of Bonny. There was a kinship in their minds' simplicity which enabled them to trade and quarrel amicably. Captain Crow was not, it appears, unduly disturbed by the kings' cannibal propensities. Unlike Captain Snelgrave he refrained from moral dissertations, although, when King Pepple expressed his intention of feasting upon a captive Quaw chief, Crow offered him the price of three slaves for the victim's release. His offer was refused and after the banquet "all said he had tasted delicious."

In 1796 Crow was mate of the *James*, Captain Gibson. The *James* weighed anchor on 15th January, 1797, and dropped down Bonny river with four hundred slaves on board. Five leagues from the coast she grounded on a sandbank. The tide was at half ebb, she was swung over

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the tail of the bank and the captain anchored in deep water with six feet of water in the hold. The water was rising against the pumping. The captain put off in the ship's boat to seek assistance from Bonny. Crow, with the ship's carpenter went below to search for the leak. They heard the rush of water through the fore-peak, where a splice had been made in the keel. The carpenter averred that there were no materials in the ship with which the leak could be caulked. But the twenty-one year old mate, with the energy and resolve of youth, was undeterred. In the James was surely something with which to stem the inrush. Stem it he did, with slabs of salt beef. It was dark when they had finished and Crow ordered lights shown in various parts of the ship and a gun fired every half hour to guide the Captain, who, however, did not return before dawn. Captain Gibson commended Crow, but beef-caulkings would not last the Middle Passage and the James was beached in Bonny Creek for repairs. It was dusk by the time the last batch of slaves had been taken aboard the other Liverpool ships in the river. The news of the James's beaching had spread. The natives crowded to the creek; the James their lawful prize. The stranded white men on board were powerless to stop the plundering. Ant-like the negroes swarmed; cut, tore down and bore away timber, ropes, canvas and stores. But Hugh Crow had stowed his personal possessions in the booms and securely perched, armed with six-pound shot, he defended them against the intruders. Before the negroes had stripped the ship, however, before they turned their full attention to the defiant Crow, King Pepple and King Holiday arrived to control their subjects.

"I was rejoiced at the truce," wrote Crow, "for although my ammunition was not yet expended, so desperate and destructive was my defence, that had my

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assailants not been called off, they would, in revenge, certainly have killed me in the end. . . . The ship, in a few days was literally torn to pieces, and a demand was even made for half the number of blacks we had on board. The fatigues I had undergone brought on a severe illness, which continued for several days. On my recovery, I was invited by the Kings and the great men to spend some time with them on shore. When I reached the town, all classes were lavish of their presents to me (for I was always on good terms with the inhabitants), and even the children sang after me in the streets." Festivities were held in honour of the particular god by whose good graces the James had been driven ashore, and, to demonstrate their goodwill towards Crow, the Kings invited him to share in the revels.

"A grand ceremony afterwards took place, and I was sent to attend the Palaver-house, where I found both the Kings and all their great men sitting, attended by crowds of priests and people. The priests proceeded to lead to the sacrifice hundreds of goats and other animals, and the Kings were very active in performing the part of butchers on the occasion. All the musicians in the town were in attendance, and a horrible discordant din they made. I was given to understand that during the ceremony I must neither laugh nor smile, and I believe I kept my instructions by maintaining a suitable gravity of visage."

Upon another occasion, however, both he and King Pepple himself, offended the dignity of the gathered pygmies by frivolous behaviour in the Palaver-house.

Crow arrived in Bonny to hear that King Holiday's wife had been stricken with smallpox. For less exalted personages no measures were taken beyond leaving the infected person in the bush beyond the town, there to depend upon the uncertain ministrations of the aged and

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kind-hearted. For Holiday's consort, however, a meeting was to be held to which Crow, as the King's friend, was invited. King Pepple rose up to open the proceedings, and whether out of deference to Crow, or because of the additional prestige which accrues to the impressively unintelligible, he spoke in English.

"John Africa," he addressed the shrewdest of the elders who had voyaged to England and was thus a man of experience, "all big man tan (have assembled) for house, you must makey mouth first."

Pepple's call upon the first speaker amused Crow and he smiled. Pepple caught his eye, and before the astonished gathering and the anxious King Holiday, burst into a roar of laughter. He and Crow left the Palaver-house and the shocked elders.

"Crow," said the impenitent Pepple, "you and I must never meet for big palaver no more."

King Pepple, nevertheless, could be truculent upon occasion. One year when Crow was lying at Bonny he came on board with demands which Crow considered excessive. Pepple had been drinking palm toddy, and Crow was lying in his bunk with a painful sore on his leg. The discussion soon became acrimonious. Pepple vociferous upon the mean requital of his services, Crow equally loud in abuse of the chief's cupidity. Finally Pepple delivered his Parthian shot: The Manxmen, he shouted, were a despicable lot, and too poor to support a king.

"You villain," roared Crow, "how dare you abuse my country?" and seizing a stick he chased Pepple, on all fours, out of his cabin.

But Pepple had the last word.

"Poor boy," he yelled, from his canoe, "you can't havey king," and was rowed away.



CAPTAIN HUGH CROW OF LIVERPOOL

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Crow bore no malice. He and Pepple understood one another. On one voyage he brought the Chief a "statue of a female five feet high" as a present. Pepple was enraptured. He would embrace the painted lady in moments of brandy-induced affection to the jealous wrath of his wives. Crow, too, would act as arbitrator in the king's disagreements with the slaver-captains. One day he arrived to find the royal wives frantically trying to release Pepple's legs from unaccustomed thigh boots of red morocco leather that he might vent his wrath unhampered upon one of Mr. Aspinall's captains. By tactful promises the king was pacified, and the captain, new to the coast, was given a lesson in the importance of ceremonial observance.

The kings of Bonny were absolute but elective. The small states along the African littoral were chiefly ruled by such kings, supported by pynims—tribal elders who enforced the jurisdiction of the country. In the Palaver-house they would publicly conduct the trials of criminals accused of any offence except that of witchcraft. Almost every native town on the Gold Coast had its court of justice. From the contemporary personal reports of English fort-governors and employees, of slaver captains, surgeons and ships' officers, it is evident that the African chiefs had a highly developed system of government and a rigid code of laws, and that, influenced largely by superstition as they were, they yet lived in ordered communities and were as far removed from the "barbarous brutish nations" of the Liverpool merchants' conception, as their cruel witchcraft trials were akin to the religious inquisitions and pogroms of civilised Europe.

Both Richard Miles, the Governor of Cape Coast Castle, and John Fountain who lived for eleven years at Cape Coast and Accra, maintained that the native



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judges, although paid for their services, never profited from convictions, and John Barnes, the Governor of Senegal, although "he did not undertake to say there are no unjust convictions," believed justice to be fairly administered, the judge having no advantage in the issue of trials.

The trials were held in the village market places where there was no court house, and the pynims, in the straw hats peculiar to their office, would try the cases openly. The penalty for adultery, theft and debt was usually slavery. But the Africans' domestic slaves were punished with lashes in proportion to the gravity of the offence, or sentenced to be sold to the white men for serious crimes. The proceeds of the sale of a convicted criminal were shared by the town or village from which he came or allotted to the plaintiff.

The trials for witchcraft were conducted secretly. There is no record among the many accounts heard by the parliamentary committees in 1789 and 1790 of any white man having been allowed to see one, although they were roughly acquainted with the procedure through the details they gleaned from the negroes themselves.

The method of establishing guilt most general along the African coast was by ordeal. Fire was sometimes used, but more commonly the culprit was forced to drink the infusion of "a malignant root" as one Captain described it. This was simply termed "Red water," and since the decoction was extremely poisonous, few suspected sorcerers innocent or guilty survived it. The natives, however, most probably knew of antidotes to the poison since there are cases on record where the accused was acquitted by his ability to survive the draught.

"Mr. Dawes and two or three other gentlemen," wrote Anna Maria Falconbridge, "... stoped at Signior

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Domingo's, where they expected to have seen a late favourite woman of King Jemmy's drink the red water, for suspicion of witchcraft, but their curiosity was disappointed by the ceremony being performed in an inland town; however they were informed the woman had drank the water, and recovered and in consequence, Jemmy, by the customs of his country, is obliged either to pay the woman's parents a slave, or the value of one in goods."

The trial by poison appears to have been the least unpleasant punishment for witches and sorcerers. They died within a few hours from its effects, or, had they knowledge to circumvent the pynims, drank, survived and were acquitted honourably with damages. Trial by torture either killed the suspect, mutilated him for life or extorted confession, whereupon he was sold to the white slavers, or, should the torturers have been over-zealous and thereby spoilt the market value of their prisoner, dragged into the bush and strangled. The whole family of a sorcerer was sold, the evil powers, evidently held hereditary. In rare cases the pynims would be more lenient.

Awishee, a rich native trader of Tantom on the Guinea Coast, fell ill. His family swore that he had been bewitched by an old pynim, and when, a few days later, Awishee died, the venerable Elder and his entire family were brought to trial. The old man was convicted and sold, and his family was merely driven out into the jungle.

The Captains never enquired of the black slave broker how his slaves were obtained. Questions led to embarrassing situations. The slave dealer might find himself and his family sold in his turn, by failure adequately to account for his legal right to dispose of a fellow countryman. Falconbridge maintained that the kidnapping of slaves was frequent. A negro employed in a

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slave ship on the coast told him that he had been invited to drink with the black brokers on board a Guineaman and they had tried to kidnap him. A woman slave told him how she had been carried off while returning from a neighbour's house, and a man and his son, that they had been kidnapped while planting yams and sold.

Sarri, a Congo boy of fourteen, son of Scindia Quante, a great warrior, living far inland told how one day, three miles away from his village he was waylaid and abducted by one of his own countrymen. It was early in the morning and the man hid him all day in the bush, travelled only at night. For four weeks he marched with his captor towards the coast, then one day he was sold to a strange negro for a gun, some powder and shot and a bag of salt. The weary marches continued, but now without concealment. But his new master sold him one day to a slave broker for a keg of brandy and with twenty other boys he was flung into a canoe and brought to the coast where a slave captain was collecting a cargo of slaves and Sarri was taken to Jamaica.

This may have been so. But it seems that Richard Miles was reasonable in his assertion that kidnapping was not prevalent, since the other black brokers in the ship would soon hear the facts from the captive and would take measures to denounce the kidnapper from motives of self interest.

The Captains, with courteous regard, asked no questions. But they were not ignorant of the provenance of many of their purchases. A Captain would arrange the purchase of a slave one day, and before the batch of prisoners were sent on board, the broker would bring another negro for approval, informing him that the slave of his choice had been redeemed by his relatives who had given one of their relations or domestic slaves in exchange.

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The sorcerers, however, were sold and shipped immediately and were returned ashore on pain of death.

But the courts of justice yielded a meagre proportion of the slave cargo.

The black slave brokers would set out with a string of canoes laden with European merchandise for the inland slave fairs. They went in style with forty paddlers to a canoe and a six-pounder lashed to the leader's prow. Four or five days they would paddle up-stream to the nearest market of the up-country slave traders. The negroes collected there for sale were from many tribes. Prisoners of war, raided captives, criminals exiled and sold from their villages. Marched for days through jungle and scrub from other inland markets they were dejected, apathetic—scrofulous and scarred with yaws. There was a babel of different dialects; a wild variety of tattoo patterns and mud-plastered hair-dressing; of filed teeth and tribal marks. The coast traders would buy all but the dying, fling them, bound with lianas, in the watery bottoms of the canoes, cover them with a few mats, and, as indifferent to their welfare as the fisherman for his gasping catch, sail down river on the fast yellow current with drums beating and flags of Manchester bunting fluttering.

In the brokers' pens the slaves would be well-fed, fattened up for sale, and while a ship was slaving there would be four or five brokers in daily attendance. Sometimes, if the ships were anchored at sea, they would sleep on board—sleep off trade brandy—and await the canoes of their underlings with more slaves to barter. The slavers' decks too would be littered with hostages, whom they called pawns. They were usually women and children held on board until the chiefs or traders had paid for all the trade goods they had obtained from the captain on credit. Unredeemed, they would be branded with the

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mark of the ship's owner, sent down to join the rest of the slaves.

At Cape Coast, Anamboe, or wherever the Company of Merchants trading to Africa had its forts, the slaves were collected in the walled yards to await the ships. The Captain and Surgeon examined the negroes—limbs, teeth, feet, eyes—and before sending them on board, the surgeon branded them neatly on the breast with red-hot irons. Often there were three sets of irons, it was compatible with the dignity of a prosperous merchant to brand his slaves not only with his trade-mark, but also with his arms and his name. The yard reeking with the smell of burning flesh, mud walls catching and throwing back cries of agony and terror, the captain and the factor complacently talking trade prospects, politely commiserating with the surgeon on his hot task. A glass of wine by way of refreshment? And they retire to the fort living-room, black after the compound's glare, to finish their business over a bottle of port.

This was respectable and legitimate trading. The captains condemned with righteous indignation those of their fellow countrymen who resorted to illegal means for obtaining their slaves. Many of them stoutly asserted that "panyaring" never occurred. John Fountain of Cape Coast said that he "had never heard of such a thing in his life as an African trading ship carrying off free negroes against their inclination." He knew however, that a man named Griffiths carried off two negroes entrusted to his care from St. Andrews on the Windward Coast and on his return had stated that they had died of smallpox. The Chiefs, however, disbelieved his story and put him to death. "The act" said he, "was severely reprobated by the Governor and Council . . . who wrote home about it." Such moral indignation was perfectly genuine.

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Panyaring bred mistrust in the negroes and trade suffered.

The Captain of the *Venus*, slaving in Calabar, sent a boat to Fernando Po in charge of one of his officers to buy yams. Smith, the officer in charge, enticed a canoe to come alongside, in which were ten negroes. The seamen fired, and such of the canoe's crew who were not killed or had not jumped overboard were taken triumphantly to Calabar. Smith, to his chagrin, instead of being commended was roundly abused and the Captain sent the two prisoners ashore forthwith. But when the long-boat followed to fill the ship's water casks, the negroes, far from being impressed with the Captain's generous treatment of their fellows, attacked and wounded the landing party and drove them back to their boat.

"We have often lain by before a town," wrote Captain Donnan some years earlier, "and fired a gun for the natives to come off and inform us what Town or Place it was, but were never the wiser, for no soul came near us. But at length we learned by some ships that were trading down the Coast, that the Natives seldom ventur'd aboard an English ship, for fear of being panyared."

Donnan wrote in 1726 when the slave trade was not so highly organised as it later became. The Captains learned that panyaring rarely paid. But record of panyaring on a grand scale is contained in a letter which Doctor Currie, one of William Rathbone's friends, wrote to Miss Cropper in 1788. . . . "Messrs. Gregson Case etc., the owners of the ship commanded formerly by the famous Luke Collingwood, sent another ship to the coast of Africa lately, commanded by a man of the name of Bibby—[Dr. Currie, conscious perhaps of indiscretion deleted Bibby's name, without much thoroughness, however.] . . . this person in defiance of faith and custom, after he had slaved his ship, brought off the

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coast thirty free men, who had been on board his ship as hostages or pawns, to sell for slaves in the West Indies. The natives were enraged at this outrage, and to revenge it, attacked the three next Liverpool ships that came in, all belonging to John Fisher, took them, carried the captains and crews into captivity where it is supposed they will be cut off by poison.—One of the ships they however enlarged and gave to a part of the white men who if they could recover and bring back the pawns were to have their countrymen delivered to them.—They overtook Bibby [Dr. Currie engrossed in his story, neglecting discretion] at Barbadoes but the savage refused to give up the pawns.—they pursued him to Dominica where the cargo was to be sold.—Here they were to renew their contention and to endeavour the recovery of these hostages by one means or another. They however cannot effect this by law and before it can be done anyway, it is probable the Liverpool crews will have perished in captivity. Such things have often happened before, but such vigorous conduct on the part of the natives is rather a novelty. The story ought to be known—the accounts from the West Indies only arrived yesterday.”

During the years following the American War of Independence when there would be sometimes “as many as fifteen sail English and French” waiting to slave in Bonny river alone, the demand for slaves exceeded immediate supply. Delay was costly in money and men and the captains sometimes bought slaves by “boating.” But this method of sending parties of the ship’s officers and crew up the rivers to buy slaves was resorted to only with reluctance, since the toll of seamen’s lives was always a heavy one from fevers, dysentery, typhoid or sunstroke.

Competition between the ships sent slave prices soaring,

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and the more bloodthirsty and rapacious of the kings, determined to profit before the white men's frequent wars once more spoiled trade, would execute a "Grand Pillage."

Powder and shot from the fort or the captains; rum and brandy for the warriors; a day-long carousal to the beating of drums, and the warpath at nightfall, with the town still and deserted. Hundreds of warriors with spear and shield stealing to surround the distant village—the most populous, the most healthy village. Bands of men lying in wait for fugitives and the advance guard lighting torches to throw among the straw-thatch. The village ablaze, men, women and children seized and bound—and next day another Guineaman slaved, and a drunken African king sweating in red cloth and gold lace.

For the captains the risks of war hardly outweighed those of peace and prosperity. If, in war time they avoided French men-of-war and privateers, slaves, at least were cheap, and slaving easy and swift. In peace time they spent hot weary months waiting to complete their cargo, seeing their men sicken and die, their provisions dwindling and their trade goods barely outlasting the full slaving of their ships. They ran the danger of their owners' displeasure, the mutiny of their idle sickly men, and the death of their slaves.

Often they would prefer to sail from port to port, trading where they might, rather than dangerous inactivity.

"February 3rd. . . No trade" runs the Log of the Ranger off Anamboe.

"February 4th . . . bought one slave. Men stitching sails."

During the next two weeks Captain Corran bought only twelve slaves.

"March 20th . . . bartered two Women Slaves and one



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small Anchor for Rum. Heavy surf swell prevented natives coming off."

On 9th April the Ranger sailed for Cape La Hooe and from April till June the log repeats its monotonous "Bought one slave" "Bought two slaves."

By trade with factors, kings or brokers; by boating or coast trading, the captain would slave his ship. Many days, however, before he was ready to sail he signalled his intention of doing so, with a gun-shot, a loose foretop sail and the ensign hoisted each morning. The natives were slow in settling their accounts. Debts liquidated, goods sold, stores of water, wood and yams aboard, he would command the "house" dismantled, the ship cleared and make ready for sea. Yards and topmasts up; running rigging reeved; sails bent. The last black broker grinning drunken farewells from his canoe, and the Bonny ship dropping down the river to await the tide to take her over the bar.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MIDDLE PASSAGE

**J**OHAN FOUNTAIN, commander of the Royal African Company's troops at Cape Coast Castle and Governor of Tantom, was of the opinion "that the purchase of slaves by Europeans, preserves their lives and adds to their ease and comfort." Whatever his idea of ease and comfort may have been, the Middle Passage could scarcely have conformed to it.

In the best of the Guinea ships the slaves' quarters were kept clean, as the Europeans of the day understood cleanliness. The Ranger's log book reports a weekly swabbing and washing of the women's quarters and Captain William Littleton, who traded to Gambia, described a daily "scraping and swabbing" of the "slave" rooms and a bi-weekly fumigation and washing with vinegar. But Captain Littleton's ideas of hygiene were by no means general. Eighteenth-century England regarded frequent bathing as highly dangerous to the health, and fresh night air was endowed with particularly injurious qualities. Captain Frazer, the Bristol slaver captain, with laudable modernity disagreed with the majority of his fellows who asserted that "frequent washing of the floors was pernicious." Therefore, if the ports were firmly shut at night and if the decks were washed only once a week, the captains were but exercising kindly and due care for the health of their cargoes.

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But if the best slaving ships were reasonably clean they were always overcrowded. "In most ships," said Captain-Surgeon Knox, "you may stand upright under the gratings and in others all over the ship." Captain Knox was a supporter of the slave trade. He stoutly denied all knowledge of cruelty to slaves or seamen, he "had no doubt but the negroes lie in the night in tolerable comfort," and yet he proceeded to give details of atrocious overcrowding to support his assertion. His ship measured five feet ten inches between decks, and the slave platforms which were built "nearly in the middle between the decks" were separated by only two feet eleven inches. Generally, he said, the slaves in his ship had room to lie upon their backs, "but sometimes not." In his last voyage as surgeon in the *Tartar* to Angola the 602 slaves, except a few lying on deck, had not "the breadth of their backs", but, he added, in complete justification, he only lost nine in the Middle Passage.

The Middle Passage lasted from seven weeks to two months, the slaves were allowed on deck every day till five or six o'clock in the evening in fine weather. In bad weather, which was frequent, they were kept below all day. Twenty-four hours chained two by two, lying on hip and shoulder, with a few inches to spare above. Day after day, in stormy weather, sick and retching with no room to turn, no room to raise a hand. "The negroes lie . . . in tolerable comfort." The mentality of such men as Knox, and there were many like him, is an enigma.

Falconbridge gives the measurements of a 235 ton Liverpool slave ship which carried between six and seven hundred slaves from Bonny. Her width across the beam was twenty-five feet, and she measured ninety-two feet in length between decks. The space was divided into four rooms of which one was a store room. The male

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slaves' room was approximately forty-five feet long, that of the women ten feet, and that of the boys twenty-two feet. Each room was divided by a platform. The slaves were obliged to lie one on top of the other since there was no space even to lie on their sides. Fifteen died before the ship left Bonny river, and three hundred during the Middle Passage.

The quarrels between the slaves were many and frequent. The negroes were of different, usually hostile, tribes. They were chained together indiscriminately by ankles and wrists. They fought to get near the air-ports, the gratings. There were five, sometimes six air-ports aside and they measured four by six inches. Those who have voyaged in tropic seas in first-class cabins, with spinning fans, with air pumped down from the deck, with open ports and curtained door, know the nights when heat seems almost intolerable. Europeans, it is true, not bred for the torrid zone, but to them the full horror of the slave ships is revealed. Six small portholes for a hundred or more men. A few inches above their heads and none at all round them in which air could circulate. They lay in the reek of sweat and sewage buckets. "The men linked together often fight, when one wants to obey the calls of nature, and the other is unwilling to go with him." Another source of quarrel. Sometimes those farthest from the buckets wedged against their fellows gave up the attempt to reach them and this led to more recrimination.

On deck the men slaves, with long chains run through their shackles, lay and squatted throughout the day. Captain Knox and Captain Crow allowed the slaves to be unshackled after they let the African coast and other captains would sometimes permit the negroes they knew to be tractable to go free. Captain Crow provided his slaves with "lime-juice to cleanse their mouths, towels

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to wipe with" and "sticks to clean their teeth." They were allowed a dram of brandy bitters before their breakfast each morning, and afterwards were given water and palm oil with which to wash and anoint themselves. "Pipes and tobacco were then supplied to the men, and beads and other articles were distributed amongst the women to amuse them, after which they were permitted to dance, and run about on deck to keep them in good spirits."

They were the exceptions. The women went free and, as women do, stirred pleasure and some strife among slaves and seamen. To have kept the sailors from the negroes would have been impossible. Whether from indifference or expedience the captains allowed them the favours of the women whose consent they could procure. In some ships the seamen but followed their officers' example, and Falconbridge maintained that the officers "were allowed to indulge their passions among them (the women) at pleasure and sometimes are guilty of such brutal excesses, as disgrace human nature." Abuse of their womenfolk roused in the negroes a primitive animosity, intensified their hatred of their captors.

There were decent if ingenuous captains, who, recognizing the inevitable consequences of feminine ennui, endeavoured to provide the women slaves with harmless diversion. They would distribute coloured beads and thread to string them. But the beads varied in desirability. The negroes stole from each other, fought, bit and scratched for the red "birds' eyes," the blue "agates" until the captains, afraid of disfigurement of their wares, gave up their worthy attempts.

Mealtimes, too, frequently ended in pandemonium. The slaves were fed twice a day, at eight o'clock in the morning and four o'clock in the afternoon. Their food

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was brought in small wooden buckets; ten slaves ate from each. They were given wooden spoons with which to eat, an unappreciated refinement. They soon lost them from carelessness or intent and ate comfortably with their fingers. During the Middle Passage, when too often rations were curtailed, the slaves fought for the food and the strongest won. Water, half a pint at each meal, was brought round by a seaman in a bucket. In a sauce-boat shaped pannikin the negro was handed his ration. He had to drink it then and there or go without.

Even a food bucket could provide a weapon for a desperate negro. Captain Messervy, the *Ferrers Galley*, at anchor near *Cetre Crue* "being on the Forecastle of the ship, among the Men-negroes when they were eating their Victuals, they laid hold on him, and beat out his Brains with the little Tubs out of which they eat their boiled rice," wrote Snelgrave.

The slaves were given pulped horse-beans, boiled yams, rice and occasionally a little salt meat. The most popular dishes were "old beef and rotten fish with pepper," and a soup made of dried shrimps. "Slabber sauce" was served as a special concession. It was a concoction of palm oil, flour, water and pepper. Anna Maria Falconbridge, after the death of her husband took passage for England in a slave-ship bound for the West Indies.

"Having heard such a vast deal of the ill-treatment to slaves during the Middle Passage, I did not omit to make the nicest observations in my power," she wrote. "Their [the slaves'] provisions were excellent, consisting of boiled rice and English beans, sometimes separate, sometimes mixed, cleanly dressed, and relished with a piece of beef, salt fish or palm oil . . . a super-abundance of this was their constant breakfast and supper."

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It never occurred to Mrs. Falconbridge that "English" was not the *sine qua non* of excellence. The beans in question were so universally detested by the slaves that, in her husband's words, "unless narrowly watched . . . they will throw them overboard or in each other's faces when they quarrel." But it was Mrs. Falconbridge's principle to disagree with her husband. A slave, however, had to be kept sleek for the market. He could not be permitted whims about his food. If he refused to eat, he was forcibly fed.

The fact that instruments to prise open the jaws were generally sold to the slave ships, and even advertised for sale in Liverpool, proves that many slaves sought to starve themselves to death. A seaman or one of the mates, armed with a cat-o'-nine-tails, watched the negroes during meal-times. The slaves who refused the food because it was not to their liking usually succumbed to the persuasion of the whip, but those who had desperately resolved to die were held down while the iron points of the mouth-opener, the *speculum oris*, were ground between their teeth. Doctor Isaac Wilson, a naval surgeon, relates the treatment which was meted out to a young negro who refused to eat on board the Elizabeth, a London ship. "Mild means were used to divert him from his resolution; they endeavoured to make him understand that he should have anything he wished for; but he still refused to eat; they then used the cat with as little success; he always kept his teeth so fast, that it was impossible to get anything down; they endeavoured to introduce a *speculum oris*; but the points were too obtuse to enter; and next tried a bolus knife without effect. In this state he was four or five days, when he was brought up as dead, to be thrown overboard." Doctor Wilson found that the wretched man was not dead and "used endeavours to recover him," without, apparently, great effect. The man was taken

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below again still in a state of coma. Two days later he asked for water and drank, but refused to open his mouth when food was brought. He died on the ninth day. Such resolution was outcome of despair. Doctor Wilson quitted service in the Guinea ships. He could not obey the captains' orders to flog the slaves who would not eat, he found that the slave trade "did not perfectly coincide with his ideas" and yet he testified "that there never was a man of greater feelings, of more humanity" than his captain. And to corroborate this tribute to the captain's humanity he added: "He never allowed anyone to chastise the slaves except himself and the surgeon."

Alexander Falconbridge, his missionary zeal fanned by the Abolitionists, was undoubtedly convinced of his own veracity when he maintained in his account of the slave trade that he had seen negroes who refused their food coerced with "coals of fire, glowing hot, put on a shovel, and placed so near their lips as to scorch and burn them" and threatened that they would be made to swallow them should they persist in refusal.

Incident takes form from interpretation. Pure objectivity cannot exist in the human mind, governed as it is by modes of thought. Thus it is only fair to consider the captain's version of the story. He was sick, he said, in his cabin when the Chief Mate and Mr. Falconbridge came to inform him that one of the slaves refused either to eat, drink or speak. He had "desired them to use every means in their power to persuade him to speak, and assign reasons for his silence—desired that some of the other slaves should be employed to endeavour to make him speak;" and when they had returned and told him that their efforts had been unavailing he, "not knowing whether it was sulkiness or insanity, ordered the Chief Mate, or Surgeon, or both, to present him with a piece of



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fire in one hand, and a piece of yam in the other, and to report what effect that had upon him." He was told that the man took the yam and ate it, threw the hot coal overboard.

Captain Frazer had been twenty years in the slave trade. He had traded frequently to Bonny and Calabar. He had lost a comparatively small percentage of slaves during his voyages excepting in the *Valiant* in 1777—when one-fifth of his cargo of slaves died from measles—and in his last voyage from Bonny to Kingston when he lost over one hundred slaves due to bad weather and consequent shortage of food and water. Alexander Falconbridge made two voyages with him in the *Tartar* to Angola and in the *Emelia* to Bonny.

Frazer declared that Falconbridge understood little of the language of the country and therefore was liable to misinterpret facts relating to the slaves, that he often found it necessary to punish the slaves "slightly" and that Falconbridge, whom he ordered to carry out the punishment, since he "judged him a properer person than any other; because in general he was attentive to the slaves," never showed that he thought the correction unreasonable.

Captain Frazer recognised Falconbridge's good qualities, but deplored what seems to have been his occasional exaggeration. "I myself, Mr. Falconbridge and the Chief Mate have often been provoked to punish slaves slightly without any great cause—their peevishness, perverseness, and obstinacy, counteracting most of my endeavours to keep them comfortable, and relieve them in their seasickness and other complaints." This is a frank and apparently reasonable statement. Falconbridge was moved and horrified by what he saw in the slave ships. He became an active supporter of the Abolitionists and, as Captain Frazer, through habit and interest, may have

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blunted his impartiality, so Falconbridge in the absorption of his crusade may have found memory of fair-dealing growing dim as he concentrated all his will and purpose on the abuses of the trade. He was an impulsive, quick-tempered man, sometimes he drank too much, but he was a brave man and risked not only his popularity but his life for the cause he championed.

It was easy to forget any mitigating circumstance, easy sweepingly to condemn, when he had seen so much tragedy, so much human suffering.

A slave ship's surgeon's duty was to inspect the negroes daily. In fine weather on deck, in a healthy ship, there were all too frequently those who died from the lack of any will to live. They found means to die. A woman would use a cotton skirt as rope to hang herself; a man would evade the sentry's vigilance and jump overboard. . . . "The captain and officers, at dinner, heard the alarm of a slave being overboard and perceived him making every exertion to drown himself, by putting his head under water, and lifting his hands up, and thus went down, as if exulting that he got away. . . ." Sometimes persistent attempts would fail. "Last night a Man Slave endeavoured to cut his throat with a knife or some other Instrument and at day light when the Hatch was taken off to get ye Tubs the said slave came upon Deck and jumped overboard but was picked up with the Boat and is in a fair way to recovery," runs an entry in the Ranger's log. There were men and women who became insane through grief. These the captain would hope to sell during their lucid intervals. The surgeon could do nothing for them.

During bad weather the negroes suffered from seasickness and disease bred by airlessness and dirt. Once dysentery broke out it was impossible to check. Even

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had the surgeon had the knowledge and equipment of modern science he still would have had to overcome the ignorance and superstitious obstinacy of the negroes. But the medical men of the slaveships ascribed melancholia as the direct or indirect cause of dysentery. Isaac Wilson believed "the melancholy of the slaves was the reason of their not eating, they became weak, and incapable of digesting their food; the consequences were belly-ach and a dysentery generally ensued." He put forward the tentative theory that it might be contagious.

One hundred and five negroes of a cargo of three hundred and eighty slaves died of dysentery in the *Alexander*, one of the ships in which Falconbridge served. He would go below daily clad only in a pair of cotton trousers. He could bear the heat and stench for a quarter of an hour and then he would be obliged to come up sweating and faint to breathe on deck. The conditions below were indescribable. The decks and platforms were like a slaughter house. The dying negroes were unchained and carried up on deck—to die. In the mornings when the hatches were taken off, dead and living would be found shackled together. If bad weather and epidemic together prevailed there was no place for the healthy but among the sick.

In the Guineamen's log books the sum of the ship's stores of food and water first appears after the first week of the Middle Passage—a careful daily entry of provisions "expended" and "remains." That small list was of vital importance. The slave ships had no room to carry emergency provisions. If weather prolonged the Middle Passage, food and water allowances were curtailed. At the first sign of heavy weather meals for seamen and slaves alike were smaller, water doled out at intervals and the casks kept closed and watched.

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The Molly, Captain King, spent nearly twelve months collecting a cargo of slaves on the Gold Coast. When she sailed, at last, for Grenada she ran into storms which carried away her masts and drove her into the Bight of Benin. Provisions were already running short. Captain King put in to various native towns to collect stores. But supplies were hard to come by. The natives cultivated enough for their own needs and little besides. They preferred selling men to the scanty fruits of their labour. The Molly left the coast ill-provisioned. She was a small ship of 110 tons and carried one hundred and five slaves. Again she ran into bad weather and was seven months in reaching Grenada. Half the slaves died from lack of food and water and seasickness, and six of the thirteen seamen. In the Molly slaves and seamen suffered alike, but in the Zong when water ran short there had been no question of justly sharing what remained.

The story of the Zong is so hideous, that, had not the facts been recorded in a lawsuit heard before Lord Mansfield at the Guildhall in 1783, it would be regarded as a ghastly figment of sadistic imagination.

In 1781 the Zong, Captain Luke Collingwood, sailed from the island of St. Thomas for Jamaica with a cargo of four hundred and forty slaves. The Guineamen frequently called at St. Thomas after leaving the coast to replenish their supplies of water and fresh food. The island lay about forty five leagues from the mainland and belonged to the Portuguese.

Captain Collingwood left St. Thomas on 6th September. Early in November the Zong made Jamaica, but the Master, reckoning falsely, afterwards averred that he mistook Jamaica for Hispaniola, and ran the ship to leeward. The Zong had been over two months in the Middle Passage, fever and dysentery had broken out and

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by 29th November food and water were running short and sixty slaves and seven seamen had died. Collingwood foresaw financial disaster. He called his officers, therefore, and proposed that, since water was scarce, and a great many of the sick slaves could not possibly recover they should be thrown overboard. "For," he said, "if the slaves die on board the owners will lose, but if we maintain that the slaves were thrown overboard for the preservation of the ship, the underwriters will have to bear the loss. Besides" he added, seeing the Chief Mate's face, "it will be a mercy to save them from a lingering death." James Kelsal, the Mate, protested. But his protest was soon overruled and the officers went below to select the victims.

One hundred and thirty two slaves were dragged or carried on to the deck, and fifty-four sick slaves, men and women, were flung overboard by the crew. On the second day forty-two more were drowned and on the third day the last thirty-six slaves were brought on deck. Ill as they were they struggled. Emaciated black hands clinging desperately to rails, to stanchions, to the seamen's legs and arms. "Put them in irons." The sailors, holding down the sick desperate men, fastening the three-pound ankle and wrist chains, quelling resistance with fists and musket butts and the last ten terrified slaves jumping overboard to escape the horror.

Captain Collingwood sailed back to Liverpool congratulating himself on his quick wits, his business acumen.

But the underwriters were not satisfied with his explanation. They refused to pay the insurance claimed by Messrs. Gregson, Case & Company, the owners of the *Zong*. The case of *Gregson v. Gilbert* was heard before Lord Mansfield in the Court of King's Bench on

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22nd May, 1783, and Granville Sharp devoted himself to its publicity. Among others, he sent the Duke of Portland details of the proceedings "to warn your Grace, that there is an absolute necessity to abolish the slave trade."

Messrs. Davenport, Pigott & Heywood in support of the rule said that there appeared in the evidence no sufficient necessity to justify the captain and crew in throwing the negroes overboard, the last necessity only could authorize such a measure. At the time when the first slaves were thrown overboard, there were three butts of good water and two and a half of sour water in the ship. At that time, therefore, there was only an apprehended necessity, which was not sufficient. Soon afterwards the rains came, which furnished water sufficient for eleven days, even so, more negroes were thrown overboard. At all events, they contended, the loss arose, not from the perils of the seas, but from the negligence or ignorance of the captain, for which the owners, not the underwriters were liable.

The ship sailed from Africa without sufficient water, for the casks were found to be less than was supposed. She passed Tobago without touching, although she might have made it, or other islands. The declaration stated that, by peril of the seas and contrary currents, the ship was rendered foul and leaky and thus retarded in her voyage, but there was no evidence that the peril of the seas reduced the captain to the necessity of drowning the sick slaves.

The truth was, that, finding that they would have a bad market for their slaves, they availed themselves of these means to transfer the loss from the owners to the underwriters. There had been many instances of slaves dying for want of provisions, but no attempt had ever been made to bring such a loss within the policy. There was

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no case in which the loss incurred by the mortality of slaves could fall upon the underwriters except in those of the peril of the seas and of enemies.

The Solicitor-General, Lee, who acted as counsel for the owners, then rose.

"It has been decided," he said, "whether wisely or unwisely is not now the question, that a portion of our fellow creatures may become the subject of property. Therefore this was a throwing overboard of *goods* and of part to save the residue. This is a case of *goods and chattels*. It is really so . . . for this purpose and the purpose of insurance, they are goods and property—whether right or wrong, we have nothing to do with it."

Upon this Mr. Pigott retorted "The life of one man is like the life of another man, whatever the complexion is. Suppose the exigency described had existed—I ground myself on the rights and essential interests of humanity; I contend that, as long as any water remained, these men were as much entitled to their share as the captain, or any other man whatever."

The counsel for the defence continued. Was there necessity for the act? The voyage took eighteen weeks instead of six. At Tobago there was sufficient water for the voyage to Jamaica had not the subsequent mistake occurred and with regard to that mistake, the currents were stronger than usual. "The apprehension of necessity under which the first negroes were thrown overboard was justified by the result."

The crew had suffered severely. Seven out of seventeen had died after arrival at Jamaica. As to the loss not being one covered by the policy, the ship had been retarded by perils of the seas, contrary winds and currents, whereby the negroes died for want of sustenance. It was unnecessary to prove every particular circumstance.

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Lord Mansfield, with characteristic reluctance to pronounce a decision which would involve him in personal unpleasantness, began his address by declaring mildly the case to be "a very uncommon one, deserving a reconsideration."

"There is great weight," he continued, "in the objection, that the evidence does not support the statement of the loss made in the declaration. There is no evidence of the ship being foul and leaky, and that certainly was not the cause of the delay. There is weight also, in the circumstance of the throwing overboard of the negroes after the rains (if it be so) for which, upon the evidence, there appears to have been no necessity. There should, on the ground of reconsideration only, be a new trial, on the payment of costs."

The rule was made absolute on payment of costs. The second trial is not reported since it probably contained no point of law, but was decided on the facts.

In 1796 the case of the *Zong* was cited in an action brought against the underwriters by the owners of a Liverpool ship bound for Grenada from Cameroon. She struck the coast in a ground-swell, sprung a leak and was twenty-five weeks in the Middle Passage. The slaves were fed daily on a handful of Indian corn.

The captain put in at Barbados, to save thirty-six hours sail, but 123 out of the cargo of 168 slaves were already dead.

The underwriters contended that the death of the slaves was not to be attributed to perils of the seas, that the loss was by natural death which could not be insured against. The defence maintained that the captain had shown no carelessness or inhumanity but an Act of God had rendered food and water short. Nor would the plaintiff's recovery on this account contravene the humane



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intention of the Legislature, which was directed against insurances to protect the owners from losses arising from ill-treatment, negligence and misconduct.

In his summing up Lord Kenyon, Chief Justice, referring to the statute of 1790 cited (30 and 31 Geo. III. Cap 33, Sect 8) showed that there was a growing recognition of the abuses of the slave trade and that some effort was being made, if not to abolish the trade, at least to minimize its brutality.

"This Act of Parliament" he said, "being founded in humanity, we ought not, on any account to put such a construction on it as to render it useless even if its expressions be doubtful; but I think that no fair doubt can be raised on the words of it. The act prohibits the owners recovering on account of the mortality of slaves by natural death; but it is argued that if a captain will take a number of slaves disproportioned to the quantity of provisions on board, in consequence of which they die, the owners shall not withstanding, recover; that would repeal the Act which means that every person going on this voyage should find his interest combined with his duty and that he should take all possible care that the slaves should be well-fed. . . ."

"I am clearly of the opinion that the plaintiff cannot call upon the underwriters to make good this part of the loss."

The rule for a new trial was discharged.

"Goods and chattels"—thus were the slaves designated; insured with the rest of the cargo against owners' losses. Insurance not of life, but of property. The merchants, it may be observed, did not so much as consider the insurance of the seamen who risked their lives in the Middle Passage, nor claim for their loss, although actions were brought by them against commanders of naval ships

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for the recovery of the wages of impressed seamen.

The aggregate of lives lost in the Middle Passage during two centuries is unparalleled by any other sea route of the world. There is record of barely half-a-dozen slave ships who lost no slaves by illness or violence before they reached the West Indies. Scores of captains termed their passage excellent, recording the loss of "only" one or two seamen; five, ten, or fifteen slaves.

The defendants of the slave trade frequently argued that the lot of the African slave was infinitely preferable to that of the poor English or Irish peasant. That whereas the future of the peasant was miserable and uncertain, the negro lived contentedly in the assurance that he would be provided for in his old age. But however poorly the peasant existed he lived among his own people in his own country. He worked for a pittance, he was half-starved, but he was a free man in as much as he was recognized as a human being and not a chattel, and he never knew the horror, the physical sufferings, and the uncertainty of a slave ship in the Middle Passage.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WEST INDIES

**K**INGSTON Harbour. Friday 10th Sept. 1790. . . Sent a number of slaves ashore for sale when twenty two were disposed of and the remainder returned on Board," is written in the Ranger's log book.

The negroes saw land again, familiar palm trees, flowers, vegetation and above all, black faces of their compatriots. They were taken from the crowded decks which they had come to abominate; unshackled, washed and oiled, fed with fresh and plentiful food; cattle, prepared for market. With earth once more beneath their feet, the ship, the horrors of the Middle Passage behind them, it was little wonder that those who still had health and strength enough to care about the future welcomed the purchasers, welcomed any fate rather than that of being returned to the slave ships. Unsold, there was only death, or the plunging ship, shackles, sickness, uncomputed horror. That was all they knew, and it urged them to ingratiating smiles, to squared shoulders and physical display.

Anxiety, black fear, misinterpreted.

"Although there is something extremely shocking to a humane and cultivated mind," wrote Bryan Edwards, member of the Jamaica Assembly, in his history of the West Indies, "in the idea of beholding a numerous body

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of our unfortunate fellowcreatures, in captivity and exile exposed naked to publick view, and sold like a herd of cattle, yet I could never perceive that the Negroes themselves were oppressed with many of those painful sensations which a person unaccustomed to the scene would naturally attribute to such apparent wretchedness. . . They (the negroes) commonly express great eagerness to be sold, presenting themselves with cheerfulness and alacrity for selection and appearing mortified and disappointed when refused."

Mr. Edwards was a member of the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia, and considered himself a competent judge. But, despite the vicarious shame which his cultivated and humane mind suffered in contemplating the slave markets, he was the most fluent and urgent defender of the slave trade, condemning the "friends of Freedom and Virtue" who "openly concur in and support the uncharitable misconstructions and malignant efforts of the envious and illiberal."

The slave ship's arrival announced by public advertisement. The moist hand-bills distributed, displayed—the day of sale announced, with the number of negroes to be sold. The agents specifying their wares in the *Daily Advertiser*.

Saturday, January 2, 1790.

Kingston, Jan. 1, 1790.

NOW ON SALE

At the Store of the SUBSCRIBERS,

133

Choice, Young, Coromantee, Fantee and  
Ashantee

NEGROES

viz.

39 Men

33 Women

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20 Men boys

20 Women girls

12 Boys

9 Girls

Rainford, Blundell, & Rainford.

No scramble sales allowed now, by the law of Jamaica.

The planters in need of labour for their sugar, their cotton, assembling, accompanied by an overseer or a negro interpreter. Those less sure of their ability to distinguish the best bargains bringing the estate doctor to examine likely slaves. Through their interpreters they enquire if the man or woman of their selection has relatives in the sale. They purchase a family if it be compatible with economy. Negroes were known to sicken and become weakly from fretting for their wives, their families. A secondary bargaining with fellow planters; exchanges; an element of card-game excitement in the collection of a family. Prices varied with supply. There was always demand. Each year more land sold by the Crown, taken up for clearing and development in contracted periods. Each year sanguine Englishmen ready to pledge their credit for slaves to grow them wealth. England, too, rewarded her distinguished sons with grants of land in the West Indies. General Monckton had sold his four thousand acres of gift-lands in St. Vincent for £33,000.

A healthy negro sold for £40 or £50 in normal years. During the war with America slaves became scarce and prices rose, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century prices had doubled. There was a duty of thirty shillings imposed, twenty shillings to be paid by the buyer, ten by the importer.

The new slaves bought, branded with silver brands heated in spirit-flames; clothed in Osnaburgh linen, their masters sent them to the houses of their most trustworthy slaves, there to be initiated into the life and work of the plantations, the duty of a slave towards his owner. The

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old slaves welcomed the negroes fresh from the African Coast. Heard news of their tribes, of their relations, saw in the arrivals possible wives and husbands for their families. The new slaves received an extra food allowance from their owners until they had tilled and cultivated their garden allotments. They were gradually accustomed to the labour required of sugar plantation slaves, underwent a period of "seasoning" to inure them against the hard unaccustomed field work, the long hours, the strange climate.

The strongest of the slaves were chosen for field-work, sugar boilers and refinery workers; the most skilful were trained as carpenters, coopers, smiths to serve the estate's needs. The boys and girls and women far gone in pregnancy weeded the plantations, a never-ending employment; and the small children, supervised by an old negress, no longer fit for other employment, picked fodder for the cattle of the estate, "or some such gentle exercise, merely to preserve them from the habits of idleness."

In the close strong-smelling darkness the negroes wakened daily to the insistent blowing of conch shell or horn. It split sleep brutally, suddenly, and the mud-walled palm-thatched houses were full of hurrying figures, squawking fowls, men, women and children collecting straw hats, handkerchiefs, food and implements. They mustered in grey half-light before dawn, with hoes and bills, answered the roll-call read by the overseer. Laggards were hastened by cracking whips outside their doors, those who neglected to respond to final warning were beaten when they returned to the gang.

They set out for the cane fields in a body, and worked, in some islands, from sunrise to midday without rest. In Jamaica, negresses were allotted the cooking of breakfast

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for the slaves, which they ate at nine o'clock in the fields. They devoured bowls of boiled vegetables—yams, oca, plantains, seasoned with salt and cayenne pepper—and then worked again till midday under the overseer's eye. Boiled vegetables again with an estate allowance of strong salt fish. The fish was imported from Newfoundland, the slaves consuming—as a worthy alderman urged in support of the slave trade—"that part of the fish which was fit for no other consumption." Those too tired to eat slept away their mealtime, put by their food to eat at home. From two o'clock till sunset, another four hours, they worked and then, in the majority of the islands, each slave was obliged to cut the coarse dew-soaked grass beyond the cane-fields, carry a bundle of it back to the estate buildings. They waited tired, chilled in the dusk till the muster was called again and a cracking lash gave signal to stow the fodder in racks and mangers. Then only were they free to go home. Bryan Edwards condemned grass-cutting after the day's work, "the drudgery" he wrote, "being happily unknown in Jamaica." Back in their huts the negroes rarely had inclination to work for themselves. An iron pot, a blanket for each inmate, a table and stool or two knocked together from stolen boards; a mud floor with the smoke from the fire finding its way out through door-cracks, through gaps in the eaves, such were their houses. Time and strength that remained to them must be employed in cultivating their food patches, tending their livestock. There was money to be made selling food to the ships, or in the open market. True, a pass was required to leave the estate on Sundays—the slaves' free day—but this was freely granted. There were slaves, craftsmen chiefly, whose wives wore bright finery, earrings and starched frills on holidays, whose houses were neater, less meagrely fur-

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nished, and there were slaves who sold vegetables and chickens regularly, who made no display of prosperity. They saved to buy their freedom.

In the flicker of wood or oil light the negroes gathered in the evenings, the younger ones, tireless even after the day's work, sang, nipped the strings of primitive banjos; the older ones talked, dozed or secretly performed the rites of obeah, of traditional magic to ensure success or to bring disaster. The witchdoctors initiated, controlled them, commanded implicit obedience through fear of occult powers, became prosperous through the sale of charged amulets, of poisonous draughts, prophecies and incantations.

The negroes danced their tribal dances, howled and sacrificed to the souls of their dead and every large gathering was broken up by the white owner or his overseer. The fear of dominating mass, hysteria, of attack and elimination was ever present with the small white population.

But for six months of the year there was work to be done at night. During crop-time shifts in the mills were feeding the mill-rollers with short-cut cane bundles; shovelling the cane-trash into the boiler fires; tending the four hundred, six hundred gallon clarifiers; skimming the thick scum from the boiling syrup; ladling it into the long wooden coolers; filling the hogsheads with sugar, and distilling rum. From January to June, or February to July, the cane was cut, turned into sugar, molasses and rum.

The slaves appear to have preferred the longer hours, the excitement, the free syrup, the chances of purloining sugar and rum, to the weeding and planting which followed it. Those with experience of the West Indies unanimously maintained that the slaves were happier and



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healthier during the harvest, and Bryan Edwards himself becomes lyrical upon "the season of gladness and festivity to man and beast." It is doubtful, however, if the negroes would have corroborated his description of their labours.

When the yearly sugar-making was over, the slaves were allowed two or three days in which to order their neglected gardens, and then came back-breaking weeding of the plantations, the estate vegetable and fruit grounds; the repairing of roads and culverts until mid-August, when, usually in rainy weather, the planting was begun. The "holing" and manuring of the young cane was the hardest work of all, only men and women in their prime were fit for it. The dung was carried to the fields in mule-carts, heaped for the negroes to fill baskets, weighing from fifteen to thirty pounds, with which they ran to and from the holes. Sir Ashton Byam, the Attorney-General of Grenada, owner of a sugar estate in St. Vincent, considered that holing and dunging "please the able negroes more than lighter works", and, in defence of the overseers who used their cowhide thongs on negroes who slackened their pace under the baskets' weight, he expressed the opinion that although he did not think that the negroes would constantly and voluntarily run, the drivers would not insist on it "if it were unreasonable." An argument hardly worthy of his legal status. While they were holing the men were given a daily allowance of rum, the women sugar and water.

Slaves were valuable property, it was in the interests of the planters to keep them healthy, for otherwise they became unfit for work—a liability instead of an asset. The large estates had hospitals for the sick, the estate doctors in the islands were usually paid six or seven shillings and sixpence a year "for each slave young and old", and

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twenty shillings for each inoculation. For fractures, operations and deliveries they were paid an extra fee. Pregnant women bred more slaves for their owners, and as such were worthy of care. A woman with six children was exempted from field labour. Mortality was high among the children, notwithstanding medical efforts on their behalf. Lockjaw was frequent; the "putrid sore throat" (possibly tonsillitis) caused many deaths, and improper feeding undoubtedly contributed to the death-rate. Dysentery among the adult slaves was attributed with remarkable anatomical ingenuity by one estate surgeon to the effects of "air impregnated with moist particles which tends to give a certain check to perspiration, which being thrown up on the bowels, is very apt to end in a flux."

From his and other estate doctors' accounts of their theories it appears that ignorance rather than neglect was responsible for the loss of many slaves. Lord Macartney, Governor of Grenada, the Grenadines and Tobago from 1776 to 1779, admirably epitomised the consensus of West Indian opinion

"The treatment of negroes . . . depends much on the temper of the master, whose behaviour is greatly regulated by his own interest, connected with the well-being of the slave. I think that in general their behaviour is mild and humane. A bad master is always much despised by his fellow planters. The slaves in general seemed properly fed, clothed and lodged. Interest of master and exertion of slave are so connected with these things that great attention is always paid to them. I am of the opinion that no more labour is required of slaves than they can well bear."

That a negro was not worked beyond the limit of physical endurance was considered to be ample proof that slavery was not the inhuman institution the Aboli-

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tionists made it out to be. There were negroes, of course, whom neither chastisement nor good treatment could reform; these, naturally, must be treated with some severity. There were professional whippers, called Jumpers, to supplement the less subtle whips of the overseers. Their services were requested for the intractable. Not only the field negroes, but house slaves were often in need of chastisement. Their masters and mistresses, unable to inflict the requisite punishment, the Jumpers' services would be solicited. An eye witness recounts how the whipper appeared in a planter's house and "ordered one of the women who had been attending the table to take up her cloathes entirely and he gave her a dozen on the breech. Every stroke brought flesh from her but she behaved with astonishing fortitude. After the punishment she, according to custom, curtsied and thanked him."

Again fear impelled brutality. In the early part of the eighteenth century the whites, many times outnumbered by the negroes, dared not show mercy or indulgence. Runaway slaves were mutilated; a foot cut off, a tongue cut out. A hundred lashes was mild admonishment—lashes followed by a beating with ebony bush to withdraw the congealed blood; brine, to prevent gangrene. With the end of the American War of Independence, colonists still loyal to George III took up land in the West Indies, disparity lessened, and with growing security grew mitigation of the laws and punishments. Paradoxically, insecurity in another quarter also stimulated consideration. Year after year the persistent Wilberforce brought forward motions in the English House of Commons for the abolition of the slave trade. Ill-treatment, injustice, evil deeds rose scum-like on West Indian history, were skimmed, displayed triumphant. The

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Legislative of Jamaica began to remedy abuses, set itself to convince the misguided zealots in England that slaveholders were far from being the "rapacious, remorseless and bloody-minded" men of their imagination.

The West Indian plantation owners mustered impressive support when Wilberforce finally forced the English Parliament to hold enquiry into conditions of the slave trade. The Admirals who had commanded the naval defences of the Sugar Islands were eminently satisfactory witnesses. It was true that they had little practical knowledge or interest in the condition of the slaves; that they concerned themselves not at all with the morality or immorality of slavery, but they had expatiated on a theme—astutely exploited by the slave-dealers and planters—which appealed to the British public: the power of the British Navy, and the mastery of the seas. The question of the mortality of Guinea seamen had nothing whatsoever to do with the abolition of slavery, since any seamen trading to Africa would have to endure the same dangers of seafaring and sickness, but the argument, cleverly presented, to a public incapable of analysis, became of such importance that Wilberforce, in his struggle for the Abolition, was obliged to deal with it in detail and at length. Thus the Admirals were valuable allies of the merchants and planters. Such human and honest avowal as that of Admiral Barrington would surely win popular approval. He confessed that, being miserable himself after four months as Commander-in-Chief without having opportunity to revenge the insults of the French, he had envied the lot of the happy slaves and wished himself a negro. Certainly the honest Admiral had added that when he had had his revenge he ceased to wish himself a negro, which, perhaps, took the finest flavour from his confession, but he had given unqualified support

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to the West Indian trade, which he said was without doubt "a considerable nursery for seamen" and added that in his opinion the slave trade should receive every encouragement. In the last war he had been ashore every day in Barbados, and he had never seen an act of cruelty, or any punishment save that of a negro woman by her own husband.

The Admiral's walks doubtless did not include such strenuous exercise as visits to the cane-fields at dawn, or in the trying midday heat. Rum punch in pleasant plantation houses served by smiling negroes, rum punch and the adulation of the ladies; a return to his barge full of good-will and Georgian dinner.

But the carefree negroes' life evidently attracted the simple hearty Admirals, for Admiral Shulldham, too, averred that as a midshipman he envied the slaves and often "wished himself to be in the same situation," and Admirals Arbuthnot, Edwards and Hotham, though less appealing in their boyish enthusiasm, maintained that the African and West Indian trades were most advantageous in supplying seamen in time of war.

The Guinea captains smiled sourly as they read the reports, thought of the press-gangs and their undermanned voyages back from the Indies.

But of all the supporters, Governors and Admirals, Knights and Baronets, Lord Rodney was the slave-traders' most splendid champion. Rodney, the victor of the Battle of the Saints, the hero of the British public. He not only stated that the slaves were happy and well-treated, but added that, indeed, the masters often treated impertinent retort with great forbearance. In his opinion it was extremely important to keep up a trade which he considered to be one of England's principal branches of commerce. He dismissed with dignity the questions of

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breeding and infant mortality among the negroes, as a matter outside his orbit.

The Liverpool merchants felt they had indeed done well to perpetuate the name of Rodney in a fine new street of handsome red brick houses.

It is strange that the value of personal liberty to the slave was not even considered by these men who devoted their lives to preserving their own and England's liberty.

In 1792, however, it was deemed necessary to pass the Consolidated Slave Act of Jamaica restricting punishments and providing for the penalisation of owners who mutilated their slaves. The preventative laws are a terrible indictment of the existence of cruelty and abuses in the island, which had persisted despite the laws passed in 1788.

"In order to prevent any person from mutilating or dismembering any slave or slaves, Be it further Enacted by the authority aforesaid (the Lieutenant-Governor, Council and Assembly of the Island) that if any master, mistress, owner, possessor or other person whatsoever, shall at his her or their own will and pleasure, or by his, her, or their direction, or with his, her, or their knowledge. . . mutilate or dismember any slave . . . he, she or they shall be liable to be indicted for each offence in the Supreme Court of Judicature, or in any of the Assise courts of the island; and upon conviction shall be punished by fine, not exceeding one hundred pounds, and imprisonment not exceeding twelve months for each and every slave so mutilated."

In cases of extreme cruelty the slave was to be freed and paid an annual sum of £10 a year for his maintenance. The fine of £100 went to the vestry, parish and justices, the legislative body considering £10 a year and freedom ample recompense for incurable mutilation. No slave

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could bring evidence against a white man, but slaves' complaints were, by Article XI, to be investigated, their cases heard. The number of lashes for minor offences was reduced to ten, unless the owner were himself present, and he himself was permitted to inflict but thirty-nine! Hooked iron collars became illegal. Slaves who had attempted escape had been shackled, and the iron collar, with a sharp *cheveau de frise* rivetted round their necks.

A municipal tax was instituted to defray the cost of keeping indigent and sick negroes who had been manumitted or whose masters had died without considering their future. One day in each fortnight was to be granted the slaves for gardening, exclusive of their Sunday holiday. The Council and Assembly, indeed, sought to remedy the principal abuses, but only when policy and publicity forced them to do so. But there were no less severe restrictions put upon the slaves. The dances and gatherings which had enlivened their nights, the beating of drums, the blowing of conch shells were punishable with six months' imprisonment. The penalty for any violence against a white man "by striking or otherwise" was death or transportation. Obeah became illegal, and any slave who pretended to supernatural power "in order to promote the purposes of rebellion" was liable to be hanged. The death-penalty was passed on any slave who stole cattle dead or alive, but in the eighteenth century in England too, freemen were hanged for stealing bread.

One law, however, was not repealed, could not indeed, be repealed by the authorities in Jamaica. For it had been passed in the fifth year of George II's reign by the British Parliament—an Act "for the more easy recovery of debts in his Majesty's plantations." The merchants of London, of Manchester and Liverpool must protect themselves. The planters were notorious; they were fre-

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quently and heavily in debt for goods and provisions, raised large loans to make fortunes often unrealised. And what assets had they but their slaves? So the negroes of an unsuccessful planter, after painfully tilling their gardens, after marrying and raising a family, were seized by the Sheriff's officer, separated from wife and children and sold in public auction, sent, perhaps to another island, or to the mines of Mexico.

But the severity of the former penalties, the ear and nose cropping, the maiming and laming did not deter the slaves from attempting escape. Advertisements for run-aways in the Jamaican papers were frequent. In the *Gazette* of St. Iago de la Vega of 11th October, 1787, ninety-seven descriptions of absconded slaves were published. In the *Kingston Morning Post* for 1789 a planter advertised his loss of seven slaves.

"... Absented herself from the service of the subscriber, a yellow-skin negro wench, named, named Sarah Deroral... whoever will apprehend the said wench alive or dead shall receive two moidores reward," offered Mr. Howard in the *Barbadoes Gazette* of 14th January, 1784.

The *Daily Advertiser* of Jamaica also published purchasers' requirements:

The Daily Advertiser  
(Jamaica:)

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 1790.

Kingston, March 9, 1790.

WANTED TO PURCHASE,

A smart WAITING BOY, for the Jamaica Library, for which, the ensuing week upon the subscriber's return from Port Royal, a liberal cash payment will be given.

DAVID BOWER.



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Slaves were written of as chattels; "which" and "that" not "whom." Slaves were given as dowry, were bequeathed with goods and chattels.

There were, however, many slaves who were kindly treated by their masters, who were freed and left sums of money at the owner's death. Many owners took negro women into their houses, lived with them faithfully and took pride in their mulatto offspring. There is the abstract of the will recorded in Jamaica of "Joseph Peart of the Parish of Saint Elizabeth in the County of Cornwall in the Island, Esquire," in which he bequeathed to his brother Robert's "natural mulatto Son, John Peart, £500 sterling to be paid within seven years." Dated 18th July, 1798.

In 1772 the Editor of the *General Evening Post* published the history of Dgiagola, a freed slave, sent to him by a correspondent. A friend of his, he wrote, had lived for twenty years in Maryland. He had always considered slavery to be "neither consistent with reason nor the laws of God or man." He bought, however, a negro youth, who told him that he was Dgiagola, the son of the Prince of Foat, who had been forcibly taken from Africa and sold. The gentleman of Maryland sent Dgiagola to school, treated him as a son, proudly watched his development. But the African Company's agents on the Guinea coast had been troubled by protest from the Prince of Foat. He maintained that his son had been unlawfully sold as a slave by the white men, insistenty demanded his return. The Company, who found it greatly to their advantage to preserve friendly relations with the African chiefs, advertised for Dgiagola, offered reward for his person. His master heard of it, manumitted and sent him to London with authorisation himself to receive the reward. From England Dgiagola sent him valuable

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presents and a letter written in his own language, which was translated by Doctor Desaguillier of Cambridge.

“From the great city, 3d. moon after my release.)

“O my kind, merciful master,” wrote Dgiagola, “my good white brother, too good, a very good son of a good woman, and of a very good old man, created good old people by the GREAT SPIRIT, who made my country, thy poor (I should say heretofore poor) most grateful black prisoner, now rendered rich by thy goodness and mercy, is now most dead, most drunk, most mad with joy! Why is he so? because he is going to his good warm country, to his good old mother, to his little sister and his brother. In my good warm country all things are good, except the white people who live there, and come in flying-houses to take away poor black prisoners from their mothers, their fathers, their sisters and brothers, to kill them with hunger and filth, in the cellars of their flying-houses, wherein if they do not die fast enough, and poor prisoners talk for bread and water, and want to feel the wind, and to feel the GREAT SPIRIT, to complain to him, to tell him all, or to see the trees of his good warm country once more for the last time, the King of the white people [probably he meant the captain] orders the officer called Jack, to kill many of the black prisoners, with whips, with ropes, knives, axes and salt. The governor of thy flying-house has been to shew that which is to carry me and him to my good warm country; I am glad, very glad indeed! He goes there with wine. Should he be sick (and white people seldom escape being so there), because of thee my kind merciful master, and good white brother, and because he has been good to me, and is a very good white man too, I will nurse him myself, my mother, my father, my little sister, and my brother, shall be his brother, his

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

mother, his father, and his sister, too; he shall have one large heap of elephants' teeth and gold, for thee my kind merciful master, and kind brother, and one for himself also (but smaller). He at present is my father, I eat at his house, and lie there too upon the bed thou presented me with. His woman is my mother, and kindly nurses me, being very sick of the sea and fire made of black stones. I have received a great quantity of gold, besides what thou did present me with by means of thy hand writing, to the people who are to send me to my country, some part whereof I have given to the governor of thy swimming-house, to be sent to thee; had I an houseful should send the whole with equal pleasure; however, thou shalt see hereafter, that black people are not such beasts, and do know who to be grateful. After thou my kind merciful master and good white brother left me in thy swimming-house, we, thy white people, and we thy grateful black prisoners, were by the GREAT SPIRIT, who was angry with us, sent by the wind into an immense great river, where we had like to have been drowned, and where we could see neither sun nor moon, for six days and nights. I was dying during one whole moon, the governor was my father, and gave me those good things thou presented me with on my bed, he lodged me in the little room thy carpenter built for me. Thou gave me more cloaths than I could carry, yet I was very cold; nothing availed with poor black prisoner, till at last having asked the GREAT SPIRIT to send me safe to thy house on shore, I thought I was carried there, where thou my good white brother did use me with wonted goodness, spake to the GREAT SPIRIT, and to HIS SON, that I might keep so during the voyage and afterwards, which they have done for thy sake; they will always do me good because of thee my good white brother; therefore my kind merciful master,

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do not forget thy poor black prisoner. When thou dost speak to the GREAT SPIRIT and to HIS SON, I do know he will hear thee, I shall never be sick more, for which I shall be thankful. Pray speak for my good old mother, my good father, my little sister, and my brother; I wish they may be healthy, to many very many moons, as many as the hairs on thy head; I love them all much, yet I do not so much as I do thee, I could die in my country for thee, could I do thee any kindness. Indeed the GREAT SPIRIT well knows I mean no lie, shall always speak to him for thy good, believe me my good white brother, thy poor black prisoner is not a liar.

“Dgiagola, son of Dgiagola, Prince  
of Foat, Africa.”

Among sophistries as florid as the age, curled and dressed like Georgian wigs, embroidered and embellished like Georgian waistcoats; and tirades ponderous and rhetorical, the gentleman from Maryland stands out in his clean-cut condemnation. “Poor creatures,” he wrote to his friend, “their greatest unhappiness is being acquainted with Christians.”

## CHAPTER X

### MISSION SLAVES

**M**ANY of the representatives of Christianity in the West Indies found in slavery itself nothing incompatible with their tenets. There were missionaries, indeed, who considered that the best way in which to remedy abuse of negro slaves was to set the plantation owners a good example by keeping slaves and estates themselves, accomplishing in this practical manner the salvation of the planters and the advancement of their foundations.

In the French colonies, according to Père Labat, the celebrated Dominican missionary, the settlers had been, from time immemorial, free men and it was with the greatest difficulty that Louis XIII was persuaded to countenance the introduction of negro slaves to his West Indian domains. But it was pointed out to him that this was the only way to “inspire the Africans with the cult of the true God, to wean them from idolatry, and to make them persevere until death in the Christian faith.”

The Catholic missionary fathers of the French West Indies, with that paradoxical mixture of Gallic realism and acceptance of their Church's doctrines, regarded sugar plantations worked by slave labour as an integral part of their Houses. They were practical hard-working men. Their religion taught them not to create but to use opportunities, provided by a merciful God and an irreligious

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world, to the advantage of the Church and the ultimate benefit of mankind. They transacted the business of the monastery with the thoroughness demanded of any financial enterprise; they bought, baptised and taught their slaves; supervised their plantations; sold their sugar and rum. And from ledgers and slave-rolls, barter and trade-returns, they escaped daily to comforting familiar ritual of their chapel services. To them there was nothing incongruous in their life, no duality in their purpose.

The French nuns were no less enterprising. In 1653 Mother Margaret de St. Joseph, from the convent of Toul in Lorraine, armed with authority from her religious Superiors, letters patent from His Majesty Louis XIV, and the charitable donations of his Court, sailed for Martinique with three well-dowered novices. She bought land, built a convent and by careful management was able to buy a small sugar plantation and nine slaves, for which she received the highest commendation from her Order. Mother Margaret, however, and the novice who had taken her vows, died soon afterwards, and after lengthy and unclerical disputes between the Dominican and Jesuit fathers, the convent was finally ceded to the Ursuline Sisters of St. Denis.

Père Labat wrote a detailed account of his life in the islands. Two volumes of topographical, botanical, zoological and ethnographical information interspersed with advice to his successors on matters spiritual and practical and leavened with island gossip of a laic levity.

Labat was a shrewd, ambitious man, with a discriminating palate, insatiable curiosity, and a sense of humour where he himself was not concerned. He went to Martinique in 1694 after illness had decimated the missionaries, and spent twelve years in the French islands.

Four years after his arrival the Fathers found that, if they

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

wished to build a new Mission, and continue the work on the sugar plantations, more slaves were essential. Père Labat, after consultation with Père Cabasson, the Superior of his Mission, went to buy negroes from the newly arrived slave ship of the Sieurs Maurelet and Company of Marseilles. With him he took a surgeon. He had no high opinion of the doctors of the islands. They were liable to form undesirable associations with the negresses, which caused "great disorder," and he suspected them of converting the contents of the Mission medicine chests to their own uses. For these reasons he advocated the employment of a local surgeon instead of one permanently attached to the Order. The surgeon's presence was necessary, for the slaves must be examined before he purchased them. Père Labat was a modest man, as became a priest: "Car, quoi qu'ils soient tous nuds, & que les parties mêmes que l'on cache avec plus de soins, ne le soient pas trop bien chez eux, & beaucoup moins quand ils sortent du vaisseau, il est contre la pudeur de faire soi-même cet examen, & d'entrer dans ce detail." Père Labat, therefore, selected the twelve negroes he adjudged to be the best bargains and withdrew his eye and attention from the surgeon's medical liberties.

The twelve slaves cost 5,700 francs. Père Labat agreed to pay their value in sugar within six weeks.

The Dominicans received their new slaves kindly. They knew the conditions of the voyage from Africa, and unlike the other estate owners, who forced their new slaves to start work immediately, considered it only humane to allow the negroes time to recover from the effects of hunger, thirst, sickness and confinement before setting them to work. "It is not charitable," and besides adds the father, "it does not serve one's own interests to act in such a manner." So the Mission slaves were allowed

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to rest; encouraged to bathe in the sea; had their heads shaved; were given oil to anoint themselves, an aperient, and plentiful appetising food. After a week they were given light labour and gradually accustomed to a full day's work.

But from the first they must be made to realise their outcast heathenism. Sent to live with the old negroes, they were made to eat and sleep apart, forbidden to join their hosts at meals. Bewildered, indignant, they would enquire the reason of their segregation and would be smugly told that not being Christians they were of an inferiority that permitted no such familiarity. This, according to the missionaries, gave the new slaves "a very high idea of the qualities of a Christian" and induced them to clamour for baptism. Whether the high opinion persisted upon closer association is doubtful. A negro of the French islands knew no stronger condemnation than that of likening his enemy to a white man. "He steals like a white man." "He swears at me like a white man," he would yell in unforgiveable insult.

But baptised they were and lived under the severe and penetrating eye of the Church. "The French slaves," said Mr. Alexander Campbell, a planter of Grenada, "are considerably better disposed than the English. Being mostly Christians, they have better ideas of right and wrong." If the slaves' amenity were not due to the principles of Christianity, it could certainly be attributed to its discipline. The power of the Catholic Church could not be gainsaid. In the British Colonies the planters successfully opposed the instruction of the slaves, the interference of the missionaries. An educated negro, a negro taught that he could rely on Divine help and protection, was a potential source of danger to white domination. Vested interests governed the islands, and



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the missionaries, to be tolerated, were obliged to bow to authority. But the Catholic planters, however they personally might neglect the Church's observances, conformed to edicts they obeyed instinctively, to a half-superstitious fear of retribution that disregard for those laws would bring upon them. Therefore the slaves were nominally Christians and were weaned from heathen beliefs and traffickings with the devil by whips, which the good fathers found efficacious supplement to spiritual persuasion.

"I had the witchdoctor given about three hundred lashes, which flayed him from shoulder to knee," wrote Père Labat with satisfaction.

The unfortunate victim of his righteous wrath had been discovered at the side of a sick negress whose ailment he was endeavouring to cure by conciliating a clay monkey set up beside her. Père Labat stole to the door, peered curiously through the interstices. The sick woman lay motionless on a grass mat. Light from an oil-filled calabash flickered on greasy foreheads, cheek-bones, noses. The neighbours watched the medicine-man. He threw resin into the flame, waved smoke towards the idol, prostrated himself, mumbling. Père Labat still crouched outside with his informers. He was interested, reserved retribution till curiosity was satisfied. Finally the witchdoctor raised his voice.

"He is asking if she will recover," whispered a Mission slave.

There was a pause, then a wail from the sick woman, a wail echoed, till the hut vibrated with it.

"She will not recover," averred the Mission slave.

Père Labat forcing his way into the gathering. The sorcerer pinioned; the ritual beads, the calabash, the monkey seized and the beating begun. The negro

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writhed, cried out under the thong and his terrified compatriots begged the priest to have mercy. But Père Labat retorted that witchdoctors were insensible to pain: the cries, he said, were cries of scorn. After the three hundred lashes Père Labat set the clay monkey down before the bleeding negro.

"Pray to the devil to deliver you, or remove the idol," he commanded.

Since the man was half insensible it was perhaps not impentence that kept him silent. The priest, however, had him flogged again and the following morning went with his tale to the slave's owner, who had him well beaten to show his respect for the Church's judgement.

"What was annoying about the affair," adds Père Labat to his account of it, "was that the negress actually did die."

There was a genuine fear of supernatural power behind the priest's whip. He chastised not blasphemous ignorance, but fought dark spirits invoked. Intensity of belief in a God of goodness impelling no less intense belief in the powers of the Devil. The French are rational men. The eighteenth-century Catholics believed in witchcraft and those negroes who unmistakeably displayed their evil powers were burned alive. It is a matter of speculation why the Fathers considered it necessary to use physical violence rather than invoke aid of their heavenly hierarchy.

The Mission slaves rose at five o'clock in the morning for prayers. They rarely set out for the fields before six o'clock since the new negroes first underwent instruction in the catechism.

The Dominicans sent a good stew laced with rum to the field slaves at midday, while the children were fed at the Mission kitchen. The negress cook heard their catechism, then set them down round bowls of soup and potatoes.

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Père Labat sets forth an ingenious argument against the practice, prevalent in some of the islands, of allowing the negroes a free day on Saturday in which to cultivate their gardens and look after their livestock. If, he says, the negroes can support themselves by the fruits of their Saturday's labour, their master can equally well support them if they work for him. If the weather or sickness precludes the negroes from working for themselves, how are they to live during the coming week? It is the duty of the master as a Christian to see that his slaves are provided for.

The Catholic Missions played an influential part in the life of the French West Indies and their domination and policy was condemned as dangerous by the British plantation owners. Thus it was that when in 1710 Colonel Christopher Codrington, of His Majesty's Foot Guards, estate owner and retired Commander-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands, died and bequeathed his estates in Barbados, with certain provisions, to the Society for the Propagation of Christian Religion in Foreign Parts, it was maintained by a friend of his that he had been influenced by a Jesuit priest of St. Christopher. The conditions of the Colonel's will were regarded as savouring of Papistry.

"... and my desire is, to have the plantations continued entire and three hundred negroes at least always kept thereon, and a convenient number of professors and scholars under vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, who shall be obliged to study and practise physick and chirurgery as well as divinity. . . . But the particulars of the constitutions I leave to the Society composed of wise and good men."

The Colonel's nephew, his heir-at-law and executor, contested his uncle's will as Popish and therefore void,

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but, after various disputes the Society established its claim to the estates and the slaves belonging thereto, and appointed the Attorney-General of Barbados, and Mr. Ramsey, a minister in the island, as its agents and administrators. But it was not without reluctance that the Governor of Barbados relinquished his efforts to exercise some supervision over the Society's management of the estates.

The two adjoining estates, Consetts and Codrington, lay fourteen miles from Bridgetown. The property consisted of between seven and eight thousand acres, sugar-making plant, negroes and cattle. During the two-years' litigation the estates had been neglected, slaves had died, and, to conform to Colonel Codrington's conditions, and to restore the Society's credit, more slaves had to be acquired. The Society re-stocked the plantations with slaves over a period of thirty years and spent large sums of money. They were anxious to found the School of Colonel Codrington's imagination, but, since the estates required continual financing they had no money to do so. But the negro slave population continued to decline and in 1760 the Society allotted £1,200 for the purchase of more slaves, seasoned slaves, if possible. A committee was appointed to enquire into the precarious financial state of Consetts and Codrington, and attorneys and committee in consultation advised the Society to buy an estate which was for sale, keep the negroes, who were also for sale, and re-sell the land. It was useless, they said, to buy slaves newly arrived from Africa, they constantly died in the seasoning, and in the past it was not infrequent that only two out of three had survived to work seven years—and this in spite of "every indulgence."

The following year the Society bought more slaves and spent £6,397.

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

Colonel Codrington's educational project was a costly one. The planters were hostile; the slaves died; the managers were dishonest; but the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel believed their estates to be a sacred trust, "that the Codrington plantation would be used as an example to the Colonies at large in the more compassionate treatment of slaves," as the Bishop of Gloucester declared in 1766.

The S.P.G. distinguished their slaves from those of the laity by branding them across the breast with the proud word "SOCIETY." No one, it appears, looked upon the branding askance until 1732, when one of the missionaries—Arthur Holt—wrote to the Bishop of London saying that it was "very discouraging to those poor Creatures," that he had postponed the branding of the last batch of new negroes "until the Society's pleasure was known." The Society had no wish to discourage their slaves, indeed they were inspired by the highest ideals for their welfare, and branding was stopped. The suggestion of the Bishop of Chester that the slaves should be given rights and privileges, allowed to work out their freedom, did not however commend itself to the Society, although the Bishop declared with unusual vehemence that otherwise little progress in religion could be expected; as a concession to the Bishop, however, the houses of the negroes were enlarged and improved.

But financial success and Christian endeavour were not easily reconciled and the work of the estate took precedence of religious instruction. Mr. Sampson Smirk, a catechist of the estates, informed the Society that the reason why so few of the negroes were Christians was that, owing to the long hours they were obliged to work, there was no time for religious instruction. "They are obliged to labour from five in the morning till seven at

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night both those that are baptised as well as those that are not." Mr. Smirk, it appears, felt that the baptised at least, should be more considerately treated. He taught the children their catechism each morning, the adult aspirants to Christianity every Sunday. He was given much advice by Mr. Abel Alleyne, one of the estate attorneys, a man of admirable precepts to which even the planters could hardly take exception. "For," he told the negroes, "how fortunate you are compared to other slaves. Your baptism entitles you, providing you live up to it, to a happiness after this life." Material inducements to spiritual salvation were scorned.

The English missionaries, too, found difficulty in eradicating obeah practices among the slaves. The dead were buried in their own gardens. Funeral observances and placatory offerings to their spirits usually took place on Sundays, when the negroes had time and energy to indulge in their strenuous rites. Many of the tribal customs were harmless, although the missionaries regarded them with horror due to heathen practice. But the witchdoctors, and the negroes who claimed supernatural powers, frequently terrorised the whole negro population of an estate, and were rightly punished or transported, often at the request of their bolder victims.

Mr. Sampson Smirk, it is true, was less militant than Père Labat, and Mr. Alleyne offered future reward or retribution rather than physical punishment, which might incapacitate a labourer, but the whip was used to enforce obedience and alacrity in the field and was not abolished until 1828.

It was in 1743 that Colonel Codrington's wishes were finally carried out and twelve scholars were selected to learn divinity, physics and surgery and become good and

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

useful missionaries. This was the beginning of the now famous Codrington College which is affiliated with Durham University and where the students may take an English university degree.

Both French and English missionaries condemned the laxity of morals among the white men of the islands. But where white women were few, the admonition of the Church, even among the Catholics, had little effect in preventing the planters from taking negress slaves as mistresses. Miscegenation was not condemned by eugenic standards. Socially it was tolerantly regarded outside the Church's orbit, but moral and social condemnation is often outcome of political and economic expediency. The mulatto offspring of white and black, if the mother were a slave, was also a slave. But the mulattoes regarded themselves as superior to the negroes, demanded to share the privileges of their white inheritance. Discontent was dangerous to the wealth of the West Indies.

In the French islands a law was passed which most conveniently both penalised the parents of mulatto children and benefited the clergy. The white man proved to be the father of a mulatto child was fined two thousand pounds of sugar, the mother and child were confiscated "au profit de l'Hôpital".

"One cannot sufficiently praise the King's zeal in promulgating this law," wrote Père Labat, "but the missionaries must be allowed to say, that, in seeking to remedy the scandal caused by this crime, the door has been opened to a far more serious offence, which consists in the frequent abortions procured by the negresses . . . often by the advice of their abusers."

The charitable organisations which profitted by the law were zealous in tracing offenders. One of the Brothers was particularly successful in collecting fines and slaves for

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his foundation. He was unpopular with the planters, although he found favour with the French ladies, who regarded him as guardian of marital fidelity. The activities of the Brother, however, were finally quelled, to the malicious delight of island society, when he was accused by one of his victims of himself being the father of her child.

"Look," the negress holding up her baby addressed the judge. "They are as alike as two peas."

The Court's mirth was infectious, and the Judge, barely repressing unbecoming amusement at the Brother's discomfiture, cut the proceedings short by deferring judgement until further enquiries had been made.

But the problem of the mulatto population was a serious one, and that section of society which circumvented the law, and laughed at the admonition of the priests, was to suffer the most severely when, in 1791, mulatto discontent culminated in the rising and massacres in the French island of San Domingo. In the risings, when slave-born mulattoes incited the negroes to make common cause with them and fight for equality, two thousand white men, women and children were massacred and over a thousand plantations were destroyed.

*Suum cuique tributo.* The eighteenth-century missionaries in their unquestioned acceptance of slavery refused to accept its grosser abuses and, by the example of their own estates, endeavoured to teach the planters greater considerations for their slaves. The French Fathers, with their acute assessment of human nature, knew that their example would be effective only if they proved to the plantation owners that considerate treatment was not only more humane but also more profitable.

"He [a plantation owner] should above all things remember that he is Master of his Slaves and that he is a



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Christian," Père Labat advised. "A master of wise and moderate conduct will, at the year's end, find that he has achieved much and that his slaves and his cattle are healthy and fit to continue their work."

## CHAPTER XI

### THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

THE Liverpool slave trade prospered. In the year 1771 Liverpool ships transported from Africa and sold in the West Indies 28,200 negroes. The merchants began to develop civic pride. They left the eminently satisfactory business of their counting-houses earlier in order to patronise picture galleries and concerts and the theatre in Drury Lane. Mrs. Siddons and John Kemble graced the Theatre Royal, the singer Catalini won Liverpool's approval. The Liverpool Royal Academy was established by Charter in 1768, and in 1773 the amateur artists worked at drawings of plaster casts and copies of prints in a room in John Street; William Roscoe and Matthew Gregson were among the members of the Society. Lectures were given and exhibitions of the artists' work, which the citizens inspected and patronized. Liverpool society met once a fortnight to dance and play cards in the fine Assembly Room above the Exchange. When Mr. Samuel Derrick, Master of the Ceremonies, came to the city from the fashionable refinements of Bath, he reported with some surprise that in the Liverpool Assembly Room could be found ladies "elegantly accomplished and perfectly well-dressed," and, "though few of the merchants have had more education than befits a counting-house,

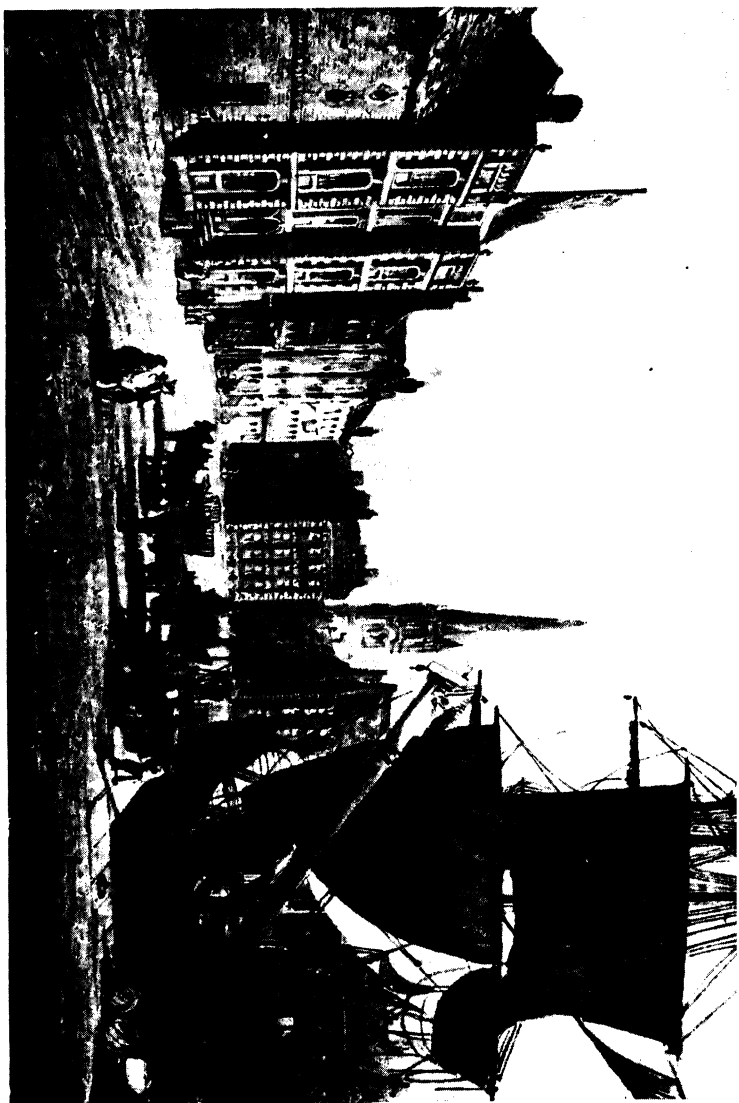
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they are genteel in their address. They are hospitable, nay friendly, even to those of whom they have the least knowledge. Their tables are plenteously furnished, and their viands well served up; their rum is excellent of which they consume large quantities, made, when the West India fleet comes in, mostly with limes, which are very cooling, and afford a delicious flavour."

But gradually, behind faro tables, between the music of fiddles, the tap of the ladies fans, at heavy North Country meals washed down with home-brewed ale, settled with punch, appeared the intrusive shadows of American colonists. Colonists who protested, appealed, revolted against taxation imposed by His Majesty's Ministers. Grenville's Stamp Act had been repealed only after the stamp distributors and revenue officers had been persecuted into resigning. Townsend's import duties had roused Boston to boycott British goods. A combined protest of colonists and merchants had led to its repeal, but resentment persisted, relations were uneasy. Sir Robert Walpole had said that it would needs be a bolder man than he, to raise the revenue by taxing the American colonists, and had not Sir William Meredith, Liverpool's eminent parliamentary representative, boldly upheld the colonists' claims to the right of levying their own taxes decided by their own representative legislature, as in England?

"It is necessary for the mother country to govern the colonies exactly on the same rules, forms, and orders as her resident citizens are governed by," wrote Sir William.

Liverpool was concerned. The King and his Ministers were courting trouble. Lord North had moved to repeal all colonial taxes but a nominal one of threepence a pound on tea; the King insisted on retaining the tea tax to assert Parliament's right to control the colonies.



LIVERPOOL CUSTOM HOUSE AND THE OLD DOCK

1 1 2 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100



## THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

News came that Philadelphia and New York had refused to allow the ships to land their cargoes; Charleston authorities had held tea in the Customs House; and Boston, with characteristic forcefulness, had thrown the East India Company's tea into the harbour. The Liverpool merchants were little concerned with the tea. Sugar or slaves, rum or cotton, but not tea. Yet among the more discerning anxiety grew when the King called upon Parliament to make an example of seditious Boston, and Parliament blindly and obediently closed Boston's port, forbade public meetings, commandeered public buildings for barracks and demanded indemnity for the tea.

James Currie, who was to become one of Liverpool's prominent citizens, wrote from Cabin Point to his Aunt Christian Duncan: "You will by this time have heard of the destruction of the East India Company's tea by the people of Boston, and the measures that have been taken, in consequence of it, by our own Government. The affair is likely to turn out of a very serious nature, as the Bostonians seem not at all disposed to make restitution, and the other colonies are resolved to support them."

The "serious nature of the affair" was first effectively manifested to Liverpool by an Order prohibiting the exportation of gunpowder. The African chiefs sold slaves for gunpowder more willingly than for any other commodity. Cloth coats, cotton and beads, knives and muskets? They were well provided. But gunpowder they needed constantly. The merchants were indignant. Coffee-houses and Assembly Room deserted while they foregathered in earnest consultation with the other merchants of the kingdom at the King's Tavern in Cornhill. The merchants meeting in London were strong in condemnation, not of the colonists, but of the Government's violent treatment of them. They would protest, petition

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

for the repeal of all Acts against the Americans. But their petition was disregarded.

In March, 1775, Benjamin Franklin, who, for ten years had been the London agent for several American colonies, left England. Diplomacy could accomplish no more. In April came news of the battle of Lexington and the following month the capture of Fort Ticonderoga. In July Massachusetts set up an independent government. Through His Excellency William Tryon, Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of New York Province, King George issued a tardy proclamation for "suppressing rebellion and sedition," and reinforced earnest exhortation with twenty thousand German mercenaries. The following June Thomas Jefferson, with four other members of Congress, drafted the Declaration of Independence. " . . . We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness . . . he wrote, after some debate and deletion. And the representatives of states which derived their wealth and prosperity from the labour of negro slaves saw nothing incongruous in the document.

In 1775 eight thousand tons of shipping had returned from America, empty.

"Our once extensive trade to Africa is at a stand; all commerce with America is at an end," lamented Liverpool's *Gore's Advertiser* in September. "Survey our docks; count there the gallant ships laid up and useless. When will they be again refitted?"

They were soon refitted. The Liverpool merchants, never lacking in enterprise, applied for Letters of Marque and fitted their ships for privateering.

The depredations of the American privateers were

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considerable. In 1776 American cruisers captured twenty-three West Indiamen with their valuable cargoes: dollars, sugar, rum and hides. It was not until April, 1777, however, that the Lords of the Admiralty gave "notice that they were ready to issue commissions to private ships for cruising against the Americans." By 1779 Liverpool had re-fitted 120 merchant ships as privateers. Regular trade was reduced; slave ships and slaves captured. But if the French could take valuable prizes, so could Liverpool. The captains were given no less detailed instructions than those which they had received before sailing to Africa. These were the orders which Captain Haslam of the *Enterprise* received from his owners, Francis Ingram & Co.:

Liverpool 16th Septemr. 1779.

... You are strictly order'd not to meddle with any neutrale Vessele whatever unless you are certain by her papers or other indisputable information (freely given without bribery, promised gratuities, or Force) that she has taken in her loading in North America, therefore you are not to pay any regard to the Giddy solicitations of your Crew, so as to be misled by them, but act upon your own Reason, and for that purpose we desire you will read your printed Instructions from the Admiralty, given with your Commissions with the utmost attention, & you cannot err. In case of your taking a prize let every Paper Letter &c. be immediately secured and sent home with hers, all Money and Valuables that can be easily removed be taken on board your Ship & on you or your prize arrival at any port in Ireland let an express be sent immediately with a Letter to Mr. Fras. Ingram, to the first post Town by a carefull hand & repeated a post or two after for fear of Miscarriage & the greatest care taken



## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

not to break Bulk, as the lower class of people in Ireland make use of every scheme to mislead & defraud.

We order upon any capture being made that your Lieutenant with two trusty officers do as soon as possible examine the Trunks Chests &c. of the Officers passengers & Crew and that they take from them all Letters, Invoices, Papers &c. & other valuables delivering them to you with a particular account of the same signed by them, in order to obviate any Jealousy or Misunderstandings. You will likewise examine the prisoners separately with great attention touching the destination of any Ship or Ships they may have been in company with, or of the destination of any Vessel within their knowledge & likewise gain all the information as to the Destination of Fleets &c. & if any thing of consequence as to national matters be obtained Communicate it to the first Kings ship you meet taking care at all times to compare the different Informations, so that you may not be deceived, to do which you may be assured every artifice will be used.

We particularly recommend that the prisoners be not plundered of their Cloths & Bedding, but that they may be used with all tenderness & Humanity, consistent with your own safety which must be strictly attended to; & as true Courage & Humanity are held to be inseparable, We hope your Crew will not be wanting in doing that Honour to their Country, the contrary of which is disgracefull to a civilized nation.

You will take particular care that your crew be treated humanely, that every one be made to do their duty with Good Temper as Harmony a good look out, & a steady attention to the main points, are all absolutely necessary to be attended to, the Success of the Cruise great Depending upon it. . . .”

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Captain Haslam sailed in September, and in October captured the *L'Avanturier* [?: *L'Aventurier*], a Bordeaux ship, homeward bound from Martinique with a valuable cargo of sugar, coffee, cocoa and cotton. He made two more successful cruises and captured rich prizes. Messrs. Ingram & Co. showed their approval by graciously informing him before he departed on his last cruise that, should he be captured by the French, the owners would make him an allowance of £6 a month during his captivity.

In the spring of 1778, when attempts to crush Washington's army had been unsuccessful, when the British had failed to sever the northern from the southern colonies, disregarded Pitt's violent demands for peace after Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown, Lord North, distressed by the prolongation of the war, sent an embassy to the American Congress. The envoys were empowered to concede every right for which the colonies had contended. But Lord North was again too late. France had decided that the Americans were valuable allies, worthy of the assistance she had hitherto withheld.

Paris Dec. 23. 1776

Sir,

We beg leave to acquaint your Excellency, that we are appointed, and fully empowered by the Congress of the United States of America, to propose and negotiate a Treaty of Amity & Commerce between France and the said States. . . .

We request an Audience of your Excellency wherein we may have an Opportunity of presenting our Credentials; and we flatter ourselves that the Propositions we were instructed to make, are such as will not be found unacceptable.

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Benjamin Franklin's letter to the Count of Vergennes graciously answered, the delay tactfully ignored.

The treaty of alliance pledged each nation to continue the war with England until peace was mutually agreed upon.

Liverpool saw greater opportunity of enrichment and Captain John Baker's capture of the French East India-man, *Carnatic*, with a cargo worth £135,000 gave encouragement and stimulus to privateering. Ships were taken, lost, retaken. Spain and Holland joined France and America. After the Spanish manifesto, Doctors Commons granted 250 warrants to Liverpool for making out Letters of Marque. Liverpool Corporation, to evade the inconvenient attention of the pressgangs, offered ten guineas bounty to every able seamen who would volunteer for service in his Majesty's Navy, and five guineas to every ordinary seaman. The merchants refused entirely to abandon their slave trading and attempted to recover losses of valuable cargoes of slaves captured by the French by giving their captains Letters of Marque. The slave ship *Essex*, Captain Potter, captured two Dutch cargo ships laden with sugar, tobacco and coffee, which was heartening, although he lost one of his prizes before he reached Liverpool. The *Moseley Hill*, Captain Ewing, which was the only slave ship to visit Bonny during the war, according to Falconbridge, captured a Toulon East Indiaman and sent her with a prize crew to Tortola, where he himself later arrived safely with a cargo of 723 negroes. Other Liverpool and London ships successfully ran the American blockade and sold their slaves for high prices in the West Indies. The *Symond*, Captain Mackintosh, an East India Company's ship, brought stores to Senegal and bought slaves. Captain Mackintosh related how he found no other slave ships in the river, and

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how he bargained with the chief to reduce the price of the negroes. But many Liverpool slave ships were captured and the Guinea trade became too hazardous, the losses involved too heavy a risk. The Americans, too, before the war had carried on "a considerable trade, chiefly from Rhode Island and New Providence to the Gold Coast" but they were obliged to abandon it during the war. The Liverpool slave ships had never sold slaves directly to the American Colonies in any quantity. The demand for negroes for the British West Indian plantations was a steady one, the cargoes of sugar and rum which they returned to England were more profitable than the timber from America. The cotton trade was in its infancy. It was, therefore, only on rare occasions, when the Captains could not sell all their slaves, that they sailed on to sell the remainder when and where they could.

Liverpool privateers caused considerable losses to the Americans. Liverpool shipping must be watched and harried. Monsieur Thurot had cruised the Irish Channel, and what a Frenchman could do an American could also achieve. In April, 1778, John Paul Jones, flying the new American flag from the masthead of the *Ranger*, sailed up the Irish Channel. He ran into Whitehaven harbour, fired ships and sailed out again unscathed; farther north he skirmished round the Scottish islands. He took the Liverpool ship *Betsy* and kept the West Coast of England continuously alarmed.

Liverpool prepared for Paul Jones. The merchants were cheered by the Liverpool press, which informed the public that there were two grand batteries of twenty-seven eighteen-pounders, in excellent order for the reception of any "mad invader" whose rashness might prompt him to attempt to disturb the tranquility of the town. To these securities were to be added the frigate *Hyæna*, a

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King's ship built at Liverpool, which was to be moored in the river; and Liverpool's land forces, which consisted of two companies of Veterans, and four companies of the Liverpool Blues, commanded by General Calcraft, who lived in Liverpool.

The following year, when Paul Jones had fought the *Serapis* in his new ship the *Bonhomme Richard*, and had proved himself to be an astute tactician and a brave man rather than a mad and rash invader, the Mayor of Liverpool called a Special Council to decide on further measures against possible attack. The Liverpool Blues, after being reviewed on the sands near Bank Hall and presented with their colours, had been sent to Jamaica, their place taken by a regiment of Yorkshire Militia. Liverpool had more confidence in her own citizens. The council applied to the Government to grant arms for a new volunteer corps and for the removal of Spanish and French prisoners from the city gaol. But Paul Jones kept his distance, returned safely to America with his prizes.

It was then that Lord Cornwallis surrendered to the Americans at Yorktown and Lord North threw up his hands. "My God!" he exclaimed, "it is all over."

But His Majesty King George, who had always mistaken satisfaction of his will for salvation of his Empire, ignored rising discontent, the longing for peace, grew indignant at his ministers' attempted appeals. He would, he vowed in disgust, retire to his home in Germany. Many Britishers wished that he would. But he and his ministers had involved them in war, and England must defend herself, make honourable peace before turning her attention to internal abuses.

Liverpool was roused from discontent and depression early one May morning in 1782. Admiralty despatches had arrived for the Mayor with news of Admiral

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Rodney's victory over the French fleet off Guadaloupe. The Liverpool Blues were in Jamaica, the Liverpool fortunes in the West Indies; Liverpool celebrated the victory with joy-bells, flags, and a royal salute of twenty-one guns. The militia, drawn up before the Exchange, punctuated acclamation with noisy volleys, and confidence returned to Liverpool with eleven well-laden West Indiamen which sailed safely up the Mersey six weeks later.

Lord Shelburne's plan for the enrolment of the civil population for defence of England's principal towns provided outlet for confident enthusiasm and gave further stimulus to Liverpool's activity and local animosities. Mr. Thomas Taylor, a friend of William Roscoe's and the Earle brothers, was a zealous and enthusiastic organiser. "I shall be obliged to you to inform me what steps have been taken in Manchester in consequence of Lord Shelburne's plan of Association," he wrote to his friend Lieutenant-Colonel Leigh Philips of Mayfield, Manchester, on 30th May, 1782. From his letter it appears that at the first meeting held in Liverpool to discuss it, the measure was universally approved, "and [erasure] chose to forward the putting of it in execution, whose first step was to appoint themselves Officers which gave great disgust and no person would enter into the Ranks tho' proposals were offered for that purpose two days."

Finally a few young men decided to act independently and called a meeting of their acquaintances. They elected Mr. Gill Slater chairman. He was a prominent merchant, with a fine house in Castle Street, would give dignity to their enterprise. As discussion developed their plan, they elected him captain of the new company as well. Mr. Taylor had formulated the plan, which differed from Lord Shelburne's since it reserved to the volunteers

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the right of electing their own officers, keeping their own arms, and of offering to march from the city when necessity arose and then only to be under military discipline. They engaged to find their own uniforms, arms and accoutrements and to take no pay from the Government. The Mayor was displeased by proceedings which promised to undermine his authority. But Mr. Slater, out of regard for the Mayor's feelings and possibly for his own business, gave orders that his company should drill in private. The volunteers were zealous: "This affair has been carried on in a very spirited manner," wrote Mr. Taylor, "tho' not at all to the satisfaction of the Corporation who are vexed at being thwart'd by the young men and at their choosing for their leader Mr. Slater, who has always been a very obnoxious man to them tho' without exception the most popular character in Liverpool——"

In October he wrote again of his activities.

"I have intended writing to you for some time past but have been so much engaged in my new occupation I have not had time to do it, Mr. Wallace is gone to Buxton to spend a few weeks, previous to which he had me upon close drill that I might be enabled to take the Command in his absence. I thank you for your reply to my request about the regulations of your Association which I am sensible it was impracticable for you to furnish me with, I need not have troubled you about it for I found little difficulty in the business, I wish I cou'd say we were in more flourishing situation, we are only 60, nor do I expect any increase this winter. We keep together very well, the light we are held in by our Grandees is indeed unfavourable, but if we can but hold together till the spring I have not doubt of our doing very well. I have had a world of Trouble about it but I do not begrudge it for I have the

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future of the corps very much at heart, our belts are just come and our new Arms from Robin which give great Satisfaction and shall go to no further Expense this winter as we have resolved that the present Jacketts are sufficient uniforms till the Spring when we intend having a very smart one, so that I give up thought of appearing en militaire at the Assembly, it is necessary for us to be economical."

But Mr. Taylor, despite his civilian garb, frequented the Assembly Room, was assiduous in collecting and collating gossip, and found time to retail it to his friend. Young James Currie had returned from America, taken his doctor's degree, settled in practice in Liverpool, and become popular in society. Mr. Taylor ended his letter with anticipatory relish: "It is said Dr. Currie and Miss Wallace are to form a Junction next month, (but I beg you will not mention my name as your Author for family reasons) on which occasion we doubt not all that is polite will be collected together, and wou'd be a glorious opportunity for the purpose."

No doubt Mr. Taylor hoped that the Junction would take place in the spring, when he also would have glorious opportunity to display his new uniform.

In February, 1783, the Liverpool Independent Rifle Corps received adequate requital for slights and merits. The Volunteers held their exercises, displayed their prowess in a field opposite their captain's house at Everton. Society gathered: admiring relatives, criticising friends; ruffled hoops trailing the rough brown winter grass; well-curved waistcoats brushing hedgrows. The gentlemen riflemen mustered with pouting chests; His Majesty King George III's colours presented to cheers and genteel applause; Mrs. Rawlinson's flag handed over with more applause for Volunteers and Member of Parliament's wife



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discreetly combined. The Volunteers marched up the carriage-way, broke up and shouldered eagerly into the Captain's hall, the Captain's dining room. The company followed. Exercise and emotion promoted appetite. Mahogany tables bore solid meaty sustenance and plenty of Liverpool ale. The ladies and gentlemen considered it only polite to show practical appreciation of their host's hospitality.

Suddenly, above crockery clatter, the ascending scale of voices high-pitched in struggling competition, an explosion, and language as forceful, surging of petticoats and hysterical feminine voices.

"Mr. Probin's gun had burst with two charges in," recounted Mr. Taylor, "but luckily it only hurt the Arm of the Person next him that fired it and that not materially. I believe it to be entirely owing to the manner in which it was charg'd, for I saw the Barrel prov'd with two Balls about a fortnight since. The Gentleman who fired it is a new Soldier and he only ramm'd the second Cartridge about halfway down, a method which would burst any barrel in the world."

Mr. Probin was destined to be the only volunteer at whose gun anyone trembled, for on 24th January, 1783, Mr. Charles Townshend had announced in the House of Commons that the peace preliminaries with America, France and Spain had been signed. Pitt, Fox and Burke, who had been outspoken in sympathy for the American colonists, had succeeded Lord North and the "King's Friends," and on 18th April Washington proclaimed the war to be at an end. In 1784 the Volunteers were disbanded, and hung their colours in St. Ann's Church.

The peace terms were generous to America: acknowledged independence, share in the Newfoundland fisheries, pensions and settlements of land in Canada for the

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combatant Loyalists. For those supporters of King George who had not given their armed assistance, England obtained Congress's assurance of restitution of property.

"The English buy the peace rather than make it," wrote the Comte de Vergennes, "their concessions as to boundaries, the fisheries, the Loyalists, exceed everything I had thought possible."

Seldom in history had there been a peacemaking so mutually approved. But the British merchants were troubled. Debts which the colonists incurred before the war had not been paid. There were considerable sums of money due to them from America. Mr. John Adams of Massachusetts might indignantly assure the Prime Minister that the Americans had "no idea of cheating anybody," but was Mr. John Adams' assurance outcome of anything more than his own opinion? The American Congress was without money or authority to dispose of the United States' funds. What guarantee could they give that the debts would be paid? Finally the British Government decided, while reciprocating Congress's good-will, quietly to retain control of the fur-trading posts on the Great Lakes, until the debts had been discharged, and the merchants, relieved, applied themselves with energy to compensate their businesses for the lean years of war.

"The Mercantile World is in a hurry and bustle unknown at any former time," *Williamson's Advertiser* declared hopefully. "The merchants are endeavouring to outstrip each other in the race of traffic. European goods, and particularly the produce of England, being greatly wanted in the ports of America. The destination of many of the vessels now in the river is altered from the West Indian Islands to the American ports, where it is expected the cargoes will sell at an immense profit."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ABOLITIONISTS

THE prognostications of *Williamson's Advertiser* were justified. Liverpool's trade revived, and exceeded its former prosperity. The African merchants, however, did not regain their former complacency.

The cause of the negroes, the abolition of the slave-trade, which they had hitherto regarded as the pre-occupation of a few misguided zealots and of Quakers, a worthy sect with an unpractical creed and no political consequence, had been espoused by able politicians to whom statesmen were according attention and support.

Lord North's deference to the King, his colonial policy, which they considered to be a short-sighted one, had made him unpopular, but the merchants had wholeheartedly applauded his answer to Sir Cecil Wray's petition of 1783 on behalf of the Quakers, that the traffic in negroes should be abolished. Lord North had said that he had no objection to the bringing up of the petition; indeed, its object and tendency ought to recommend it to every humane breast; it did credit to the feelings of the most mild and humane set of Christians in the world, from whom it came. Nevertheless, he was afraid that it would be found impossible to abolish the slave trade, for it was a trade which had, in some measure, become necessary to almost every nation in Europe; and

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since it would be almost an impossibility to induce them all to renounce it for ever, he was "apprehensive that the wishes of the humane petitioners could not be accomplished."

Lord Chatham's son, the younger Pitt, had consistently opposed Lord North. During the American War he had led the Opposition. He was brilliant and determined. Round him he collected a group of young politicians, men of integrity and intelligence with enthusiasm and energy to oppose and redress the abuses of the British people's liberties. The gatherings at Goosetree's in Pall Mall included the young Member for Hull—William Wilberforce. In 1783 Pitt, spending a holiday in France with Wilberforce, was recalled by special messenger. In two months the Coalition had fallen and Pitt became Prime Minister at the age of twenty-four. It was the Prime Minister's friend, William Wilberforce, who had begun a persistent attack upon the slave trade and was rallying the isolated groups of Abolitionists, forging and welding them into a powerful weapon, himself the spearhead.

Wilberforce, the gallant, the gay, the gambler, had exchanged Almack's and Brooks's, the glittering levees of St. James's, the splendid London drawing-rooms for long evenings with John Newton, for quiet week-ends at rooms he had taken in Clapham. He, and sometimes Pitt, would visit a group of reformer-politicians, Independent Tories and Whigs, who foregathered in the library of Henry Thornton, son of a successful banker. Their counsellor and spiritual leader was Granville Sharp. He was older than the other young men, of a different social class and poor, but as undaunted and intrepid as he had been when he championed Jonathan Strong and Somerset. The leading members of the

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"Clapham Sect," as they came to be called, were Zachary Macaulay, who had himself been in the West Indies; Charles Grant, the Member for Inverness, who had been in the East India Company and Member of the Calcutta Board of Trade; John Shore, later to become Lord Teignmouth; William Smith, James Stephen, Edward Eliot and John Venn. These men regarded slavery and the slave trade as intolerable and shameful and rejoiced when, in 1787, Wilberforce adopted Pitt's suggestion that he should give notice of a motion for the abolition of the slave trade. Wilberforce's supporters gathered. Thomas Clarkson, a young deacon, whose Latin essay, "*Is it right to make slaves of others against their will?*" had won the prize offered by Cambridge University and had been widely read in its English translation the previous year, arranged that his friend Bennet Langton should give a dinner party for Wilberforce. Sir Joshua Reynolds, Boswell, Sir Charles Middleton and Windham were among the guests. Discussion of the slave trade roused Boswell to expatiation on the negro slaves' happy lot on the West Indian plantations—they were far happier, he asserted, than in Africa.

"Be it so," retorted Wilberforce, "but we have no right to make people happy against their will."

Later, in his *Life of Dr. Johnson*, Boswell retaliated. Retaliation more fluent in the absence of Mr. Wilberforce's sharp tongue.

"The wild and dangerous attempt which has been for some time persisted in to obtain an act of our Legislature, to abolish so very important and necessary a branch of commercial interest, must have been crushed at once, had not the insignificance of the zealots who vainly took the lead in it made the vast body of planters, merchants, and others, whose immense properties are involved in the

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trade, reasonably enough suppose that there could be no danger. The encouragement which the attempt has received excites my wonder and indignation; and, though some men of superior abilities have supported it, whether from a love of temporary popularity, when prosperous, or a love of general mischief, when desperate, my opinion is unshaken. To abolish a status which, in all ages God has sanctioned, and man has continued, would not only be robbery to an innumerable class of our fellow-subjects, but it would be extreme cruelty to the African savages, a portion of whom it saves from massacre or intolerable bondage in their own country, and introduces into a much happier state of life, especially now when their passage to the West Indies, and their treatment there, is humanely regulated. To abolish this trade would be to

‘Shut the gates of mercy on mankind.’ ”

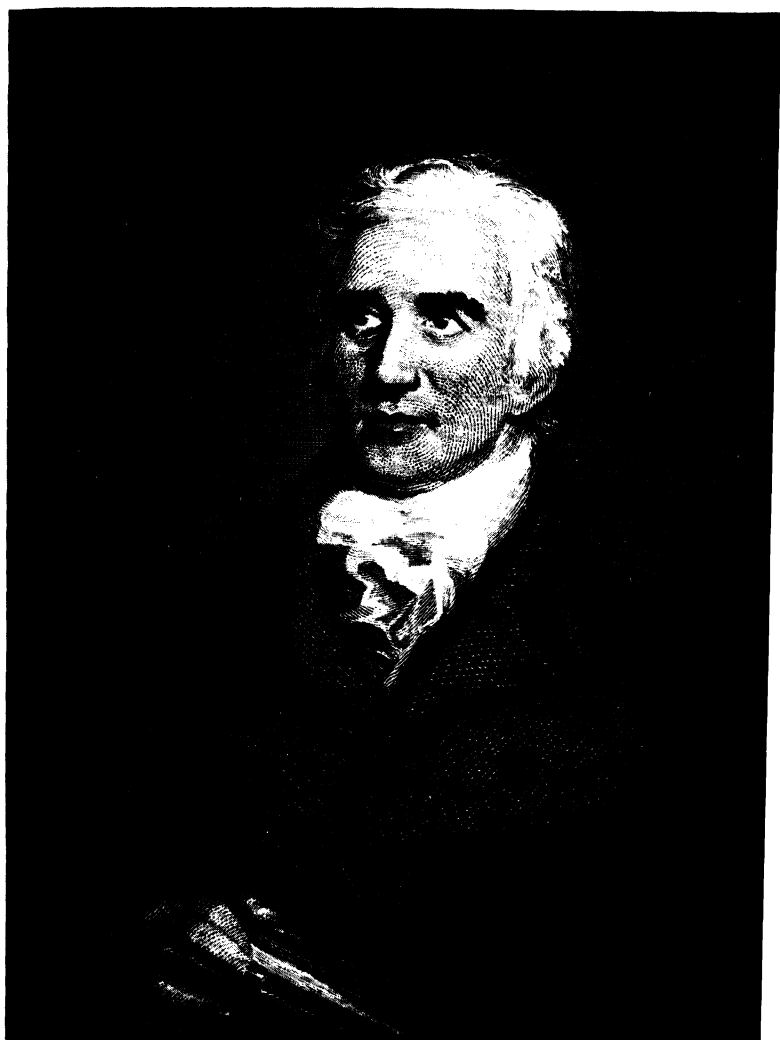
But Mr. Boswell caused Wilberforce and his friends little anxiety. The motion was framed; an Anti-slavery Committee formed, circulars dispensed, correspondence opened with the Societies already established in New York, Philadelphia and Paris.

Liverpool received the circulars with disgust. But Dr. Binns and William Rathbone boldly and openly joined the Society. The Liverpool merchants trading to Africa were shaken, but still incredulous. “We are here most of us all astonished,” runs a letter in Matthew Gregson’s handwriting, “how it could enter in the Heads of your Humanity men to think of Abolishing the Slave Trade, we were never really [sic] afraid of it. . . . Nor are we now afraid of its ever being brought about—It is a matter of two [sic] much importance to this Kingdom—Whenever it is *abolished* the Naval Importance of this Kingdom is abolished with it that moment our flag will

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gradually cease to ride triumphant on the Seas—Humanity is in fashion—its Popular—the Furor has seized on the people—The Papist declaiming, The Orator shines—The Subject is sublime—it impresses the hearers with an Idea that the Orator feels all he says—when alas examined does his humanity extend so far as his own Family—his friends or his common Acquaintance—to often I am afraid it does not. Its granted there are abuses in all Employment . . . do not they want a reform.” Matthew Gregson, a popular Liverpool citizen, a collector of books and pictures, no doubt expressed the opinion of the majority.

If William Rathbone and Dr. Binns were looked upon with suspicion by Liverpool society, after Clarkson’s visit to the city they were openly abused. Dr. Binns found that his patients left him in protest, and white-haired William Rathbone was branded as “the Hoary Traitor.” Wilberforce was no impractical idealist. He was a politician who knew that, without concrete corroboration, moral indignation could do little in the House of Commons to achieve his purpose. He enlisted the help of Clarkson and Alexander Falconbridge. With Clarkson’s zeal, and Falconbridge’s experience, the requisite evidence could be obtained. William Rathbone welcomed Clarkson at Greenbank. He obtained for inspection the muster-rolls of Guineamen from the Liverpool Customs House, which Clarkson industriously copied out, and which adequately refuted the argument that the Guinea trade was a splendid source of naval manpower. He told him all he knew, and gave him introductions and advice. Clarkson soon found that the citizens of Liverpool were actively hostile to his investigations. Rathbone’s friends and a few overt supporters of the Abolition received him and endeavoured to introduce him to men



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who could tell him of the conditions they had personally experienced in the African trade. One such, a Captain Chaffers, invited him to meet Captain Ambrose Lace, who, he said, could give him much information. Clarkson was horrified when, at the mention of Calabar, he realized that this must be the captain of the *Edgar*, one of the captains, in his eyes, responsible for the massacre of 1767. Zeal outran discretion. Red with indignant emotion, he accused the astounded Lace of participation in a barbarous massacre. This, Clarkson subsequently admitted, threw the company into "great confusion." Captain Lace, not unnaturally, suspected that the unfortunate Chaffers had invited him for the purpose of exposing him to insult; Captain Chaffers was both astonished at Clarkson's detailed knowledge of the Calabar massacre, and annoyed that he should have spoken of it. Clarkson, slightly ashamed of an impetuosity which frequently led him into difficulties, sat trembling in his chair. Lace, toughened and calloused by experience, uncrossed his legs and rose. "Aye, it was a bad business," was all he said, and bade his host goodbye.

Liverpool soon heard of the encounter and Clarkson was criticised by his supporters for his tactlessness. Dr. Currie, in a letter to Wilberforce, regretted the methods employed by his emissary, which had, in his opinion, he said, roused unnecessary hostility. "... When Mr.— came to Liverpool to obtain information concerning it," [the slave trade] he wrote, "some of the merchants consulted together on the subject of meeting him and giving him openly and fairly every assistance in their power: but finding he made no application to them, and that he went about in disguise, they took alarm, and began to discover that hostile notions were entertained of their

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conduct and sentiments, which they were not conscious that they deserved."

Dr. Currie himself opposed the slave trade and subsequently actively helped Wilberforce, but, a man of balance and far-sighted intelligence, he realised that violent and sudden attack would meet with hindrance and unconditional condemnation; he therefore suggested to Wilberforce that the gradual enforcement of abolition would be the most successful method of attaining his end.

Clarkson had, indeed, been forced to carry out his further investigations in secrecy. He and Alexander Falconbridge had lodged at the King's Arms. There slave merchants and captains foregathered to bait him, for they soon discovered that in his zeal Clarkson became divertingly angry and vociferous. "Here's to the Trade," they would shout, raising full glasses, and watch for Clarkson's gratifying and invariable protest. But if Falconbridge were there, they were more restrained. The ship's surgeon was "an athletic and resolute man," went armed, and was not to be trifled with.

But Clarkson drew unwelcome attention. He needed privacy for his investigations; leaving his luggage at the inn he took quiet rooms in Williamson Square where, unobserved, he was able to interview seamen who had served and suffered in the slave ships and record their stories. He was no longer regarded merely as a simple butt for the slave traders' primitive humour; he began to receive anonymous letters, some threatening, others warning him of impending danger. Falconbridge refused to allow him to go out unaccompanied, he himself never went unarmed. But before he left Liverpool Clarkson narrowly escaped being drowned. One windy night, alone on the quays, he was stealthily followed. Eight

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seamen obeyed the gestures, the low-voiced instructions of their leader. Clarkson approached the pier; a sudden thickening of the darkness and the wind's noise; a blow in the face and men jostling and pushing him towards the gleam of broken water beyond the pier-head. But in the confusion he escaped, partly through the darkness of the night, partly, perhaps, because the leader—a slave captain whom Clarkson had suspected of murdering a seaman—had in his lust for revenge hired too many men to assist him.

Clarkson returned to London with folios of notes collected in Liverpool, Lancaster and Bristol. Wilberforce, well satisfied, finally wrested unenthusiastic agreement from Pitt to examine the evidence.

“At the time appointed,” wrote Clarkson, “I went, with my books, papers and African productions. Mr. Pitt examined them himself. He turned over leaf after leaf, in which the copies of the muster-rolls were contained, with great patience, and when he looked over above a hundred pages accurately, and found the name of every seaman inserted—his former abode of service—the time of his entry—and what had become of him, either by death, discharge, or desertion—he confessed with some emotion that his doubts were wholly removed, with respect to the destructive nature of the employ.”

In May, 1788, Pitt addressed the House. He said that he would take the opportunity of so full a House to give notice that, on the ensuing Thursday, he would call the attention of the House to a subject of much importance. Many petitions had been presented on the subject of the slave trade, and an honourable friend of his—Mr. Wilberforce—had, early in the session, given notice of his intention to bring forward some proposition respecting it. Unfortunately he had been prevented by indisposition

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from fulfilling his intention, nor was it at all probable that he would be able to present previous to the prorogation. Nevertheless he thought that the session should not pass over without some notice being taken of the subject of the petitions. He would, therefore, on Thursday, move a resolution "That the House will, early in the next session, proceed to take into consideration the circumstances of the Slave Trade."

On 9th May Pitt again addressed the House. He announced that, in the event of Wilberforce being unable to bring forward his proposals regarding the slave trade, he pledged himself to do so. From the various petitions it appeared that it was generally agreed that the slave trade should either be suppressed, or at least be controlled by further regulations. He carefully drew the attention of the House to his own impartiality. He refrained, he said, from giving any opinion until the moment of discussion arrived.

Fox rose and declared that in his opinion the slave trade ought not to be regulated but destroyed, that to consider it in any other manner, and on any other principles than those of humanity and justice was idle and absurd. Lord Penrhyn, member for Liverpool, considered that, since the African merchants and the West Indian planters had been grossly calumniated, they should be given the opportunity to vindicate themselves. Burke, having paid due, if ironic, tribute to the noble Lord's integrity and justice, said that the House should primarily consider that the slave trade was improper, degrading, directly contrary to the interests of humanity. Political, personal and local considerations should not influence the issue. The House did not require the planters' opinion on the subject. Sir William Dolben, Member for Oxford University, described the horrors of the Middle Passage at

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length, urged for immediate consideration "If we do not apply some remedy without delay, between the present session and the beginning of the next, 10,000 lives will be lost."

On 2nd May he moved for leave to bring in a Bill "for the relief of those unhappy persons, the natives of Africa, from the hardships to which they are exposed in their passage from the coast of Africa to the colonies." He read it for the first time on 26th May.

Liverpool simmered with indignation. The slave trade regulation bill was discussed everywhere. "You will, I dare say, have rejoiced in the admirable speech made by Mr. Pitt respecting the oppressions of our fellow creatures in Africa," wrote Dr. Currie to a Quaker friend. "Here is has occasioned great commotion, and the restrictions of Sir William Dolben's are to be resisted before the Lords signed by 10 or 12 thousand persons—I redden with shame and indignation when I think of such infamous proceedings—Lord Derby refused to present the petition, so did Lord Hawkesbury and they have been obliged to have recourse to a Scotch Peer Lord Galloway, an egregious fool, but a Lord of the Bedchamber. . . ."

It was Lord Penrhyn, however, who brought the petition before the House on 28th May. The petitioners stressed the hallowing of old establishment; the benefits to all countries concerned, and, considering the projected regulations to be founded on false facts, they prayed to be heard by themselves against the Bill.

In July, despite the petition, a Bill was passed at the third reading to enforce more humane treatment of slaves in the Middle Passage, and to regulate overcrowding, but only after Pitt had quelled the opposition with unconcealed disgust. "I have no hesitation to declare," judicial impartiality shed, "that, if the Trade cannot be carried

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on in a manner different to that stated by the honourable members opposite me, I will retract what I said on a former day against going in to the general question, and waiving every other discussion than what has this day taken place, I will give my vote for the utter abolition of a Trade which is shocking to humanity, abominable to be carried on by any country, and which reflects the greatest dishonour on the British Senate and the British nation."

The Liverpool Corporation immediately appealed to the House of Lords to have the Bill thrown out. They also granted the freedom of the borough to Mr. Dalziel, Mr. John Tarleton and three other gentlemen, representatives of the Liverpool African Merchants, for "their evidence in support of the African Slave Trade, and for the public spirit they have manifested on this occasion." Lord Hawkesbury, whom, gossip averred, had himself distributed Harris's pamphlet in defence of the trade, also received the freedom of the borough, and Colonel Gascoigne received the public thanks of his constituents for his efforts on behalf of their interests. The appeal was disregarded.

The slave trade; the trial of Warren Hastings; the King's "indisposition"; they were the constants of conversation in 1788. But Warren Hastings' trial dragged on and after the first fifty of the hundred and fifty sittings, public interest flagged; the Regency Bill terminated speculation on the King's sanity; but slavery gave inexhaustible opportunity for oratory and, as Matthew Gregon put it, humanity became the fashion.

The Quaker Wedgewoods proselytized and promoted business by the sale of plaques upon which was delicately portrayed a suppliant negro who implored mercy of the snuff-takers, the bracelet wearers. Mr. Cowper's poem,

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*The Negro's Complaint*, neatly folded and inscribed: *A Subject for Conversation at the Tea-table*, was much in request. The exotic favoured the *Thoughts and Sentiments on the evil and wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species*, by Ottobah Cugoano, "a native of Africa," while upon the African Merchants' tables lay *An apology for Negro Slavery, or the West India Planter vindicated from the charge of INHUMANITY and Considerations upon the Fatal Consequences of Abolishing the Slave Trade*, both by anonymous authors.

Liverpool produced her own literature upon the subject. In 1787 William Roscoe had published his pamphlet: *A General View of the African Slave Trade demonstrating its Injustice and Impolicy: with Hints towards a Bill for its Abolition*, which had caused "a ferment among the African merchants in Liverpool," and the following year he and Jonathan Binns appealed to humanity in a twelve-verse poem, notable rather for sentiment than for style. *The African* was sent to London and published without its authors' names. . . .

"Ah wretch! In wild anguish he cried  
From country and liberty torn—  
Ah, Maraton! Would thou hadst died  
Ere o'er the salt waves thou wert borne!"

It may well have been that depth of emotion and difficulty of collaboration blunted Roscoe's usually critical and informed literary judgement.

The merchants' most honoured advocate was a Jesuit who had been expelled from Spain with his Order and who had settled in Liverpool. He produced a long and elaborate defence of slavery, sonorously entitled: *Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave-Trade, showing its conformity with the principles of Natural and Revealed Religion delineated in the Sacred Writings of the Word of God*.



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The Reverend Raymund Harris dedicated this remarkable piece of sophistry to all the civic dignitaries of Liverpool. In his preface he protested that in attempting to establish the licitness of the slave trade, nothing was farther removed from his thoughts, than to set up as an advocate for injustice and oppression: he was as much at enmity with both, as the most sanguine advocate for African liberty must be. He was well apprized that acts of violence and oppression, however authorized by numbers, could never change the criminality of their nature. Whatever was essentially incompatible with the sacred and unalienable rights of justice and humanity, could claim "no place in the catalogue of Virtues even of the lowest rank." Far from attempting the least encroachment on the rights of virtue, his sole object in the present tract, was to examine with the utmost impartiality, the intrinsic nature of the slave trade: "that is, whether the Trade itself . . . be in its own nature licit or illicit."

He followed up these unimpeachable sentiments with a long and elaborate definition of licit and illicit human pursuits and ended triumphantly: "in judging them no arguments can be so forcible and conclusive towards evincing the inherent lawfulness of it [the slave trade] as those Oracular decisions of the Word of God, which give positive sanction to the Trade itself."

The Jesuit skilfully extracted verses from the Old Testament suitable to his purpose, commenting upon them at length. "Every transaction of Abraham's life," he asserted, demonstrated "positive approbation" and "sanction of Divine Authority in favour of the Slave Trade." This interpretation of Divine commonsense so profoundly impressed and delighted the Corporation of Liverpool that they presented the Reverend Harris with £100.

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Roscoe studied the pamphlet, got out his Bible and wrote: *A Scriptural Refutation of a Pamphlet lately published by the Rev. Raymund Harris*, which was equally well received by the Abolitionists.

In the ensuing year, the committee appointed by Pitt began their investigation into the conditions of the slave trade and on 12th May Wilberforce made his first attack.

Grenville was in the Speaker's chair. Wilberforce rose before a crowded House. What should they suppose would naturally be the consequence of England carrying on a slave trade with Africa, with a country vast in its extent, not utterly barbarous but civilized in a small degree, he demanded. Was it not plain that she must suffer from it, that civilisation must be checked, that her barbarous manners would be made more barbarous, by her intercourse with Britain? Did not everyone see that the slave trade carried on round her coasts must carry violence and desolation to her very centre—that in a continent just emerging from barbarism, if a trade in men were established, if the men were converted into goods, and became commodities to be bartered, it followed that they would become subject to ravage just as goods were?

The slave trade, he said, stimulated vice and sensuality in the African chiefs. The kings sold slaves to satisfy acquired taste, for brandy, for European goods. He referred to the massacre of Old Calabar; outlined the terrible conditions of the Middle Passage, revealed by the evidence given before the Privy Council, despite the rosy picture painted by the Liverpool delegates.

"How can the House refuse its belief to the multiplied testimonies before the Privy Council? Nay, indeed, what need is there of any testimony? The number of deaths speaks for itself, and makes all such enquiry superfluous."

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He had in his hand, he said, an extract from a pamphlet which stated, in very dreadful colours, that thousands and tens of thousands would be ruined—how England's wealth would be impaired and one-third of her commerce cut off for ever—how her manufactures would drop in consequence, how the land-tax would be raised, the marine destroyed, while France, England's natural enemy and rival would strengthen herself by England's weakness. He was interrupted by cries of assent from various parts of the House. He held up his hand.

"I beg, Sir, that gentlemen will not mistake me. The pamphlet from which this prophecy was taken was written by Mr. Glover in 1774 on a very different occasion and I would ask, gentlemen, whether it has been fulfilled. Is our wealth decayed? Our commerce cut off? Our manufactures and our marine destroyed? Is France raised up upon our ruins? On the contrary, do we not see from this pamphlet how men in a desponding moment will picture themselves the gloomiest consequences from causes by no means apprehended? We are apt to be carried away by a frightened imagination. Like the poor negroes, we are all in our turn subject to Obeah. And when we have an interest to bias us, we are carried away ten thousand times more. The African merchants told us last year that, if less than two men to a ton were to be allowed, the trade could not continue. Mr. Tarleton, instructed by the whole trade of Liverpool, told us that commerce would be ruined and that our manufactures would migrate to France. We have petitions on the table from our manufacturers, but I believe they are not dated at Havre, or any port in France. And yet it is certain that out of twenty ships last year from Liverpool not less than thirteen carried this very ruinous proportion of less than two to a ton. It is said that Liverpool will be

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undone. The trade, says Mr. Dalziel, now hangs upon a thread, and the smallest matter will overthrow it. I believe indeed that the trade hangs on a thread: for it is a losing trade for Liverpool. It is a lottery, in which some men have made large fortunes, chiefly by being their own insurers, while others follow the example of a few lucky adventurers and lose money by it. . . ."

He pointed out that Clarkson's evidence proved that more sailors died during one year in slaving ships than died in two years in all the other trades. By the muster-rolls of eighty-eight slave ships which sailed from Liverpool in 1787 of which the total crews numbered 3,170, only 1,428 returned.

Wilberforce was followed by Burke, Fox and Pitt, and finally the House accepted proposals that the evidence should be heard before its own Committee.

Robert Bostock wrote to Captain Fryer in May, anticipating the worst: ". . . and I hope this will meet you with a good and Healthfull Cargo and hope you will arrive at a Good Market as the Abolition for the Slave trade is likely to take place." But, despite the mass of evidence collected by the Lords of the Committee of Council during the following year, Wilberforce's motion for the Abolition was rejected in 1791 by 163 votes to eighty-eight. He was disappointed but not daunted. The Abolitionists worked indefatigably. They mobilized public opinion, collected petitions, wrote tracts and pamphlets, and Wilberforce bided his time.

In August, 1789, Clarkson visited Paris with a French secretary and interpreter and instructions from Wilberforce. In France for many years growing discontents had led to closer analysis of the rule of princes and bishops. Gradually there grew reaction against despotic government. The French had become, too, gradually aware of

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English thought, of the English, whom they had hitherto regarded with superior complacency, as a people who had fought for and retained their free constitution and grown to power and prosperity. Eminent and progressive Frenchmen visited England, learned English. Voltaire, who first interpreted Newton to France; Mirabeau, Lafayette, Rousseau, Raynal. Mirabeau admired and studied the English Constitution, not, it may be observed, England's government. For in England, as in France, the progressive spirits, the advocates of political freedom and religious scepticism, were in constant opposition to the established reactionaries. In France a decree was issued in 1764 forbidding any work to be published in which questions of government were discussed, and in 1767 a law was passed whereby sentence of death was passed on any author of writings "tendant à emouvoir les esprits."

In the thirty-ninth year of George III an Act was passed which stated that: "Every house, room, or place, which shall be opened or used as a place of meeting for the purpose of reading books, pamphlets, newspapers, or other publications, and to which any person shall be admitted by payment of money, if not regularly licenced by the authorities, shall be deemed a disorderly house." Laws were passed with the evident intention of muzzling the press, of preventing any writer from expressing independent views.

"The prosecutions," wrote Currie, "that are commenced all over England against printers, publishers, etc: would astonish you; . . . The printer of the Manchester Herald has had seven different indictments preferred against him, for paragraphs in his paper, and six *different* indictments for selling or disposing of six different copies of Paine."

Thomas Paine, who had acted as Secretary for For-

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eign Affairs to Congress during the war, whose *Rights of Man* had greatly influenced the American colonists, was dangerous to established *arcana imperii*. "There never did, there never will, and there never can exist a parliament, or any description of men, in any country, possessed of the right or the power of binding and controuling posterity to the *end of time* or of commanding forever how the world shall be governed, or who shall govern it." Tom Paine had a large following, he was rousing the masses to analytical thinking, and therefore he must be suppressed. George III's government discouraged thought even as did the government of Louis XVI.

It was, therefore, with sympathy that the Abolitionists heard of the fall of the Bastille, and Clarkson, far from being deterred by signs of revolution in France, felt the time to be a propitious one for his visit. The year before, the Society of Les Amis des Noirs had been founded. Madame Necker, wife of the Minister, was an enthusiastic member, and, indeed, entertained the idea of translating Roscoe's pamphlet on the slave trade into French. Condorcet, Lafayette, Mirabeau and La Rochefoucauld were also members. Mirabeau, in particular, welcomed Clarkson's advent. He was preparing a speech dealing with the slave trade for the Assembly and lacked circumstantial evidence, could Clarkson assist him? Clarkson could and would, and with the unreflecting zeal which characterized him, wrote Mirabeau letters of fifteen to twenty pages every day for a month.

Louis XVI himself asked that copies of Clarkson's pamphlet: *Essay on the Impolicy of the Slave trade* should be sent to him. Impolicy! He was learning the meaning of that word now. Clarkson was still in Paris when Versailles was invaded and the King and Queen taken to the Tuileries.

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At Lafayette's house Clarkson met six mulatto representatives from the French-owned half of the island of Santo Domingo. He was impressed by their intelligence and manners. "Their behaviour was modest and their appearance genteel," he wrote. They had come to Paris to present Lafayette with a present of six million livres and a request that he should become Commander-in-Chief of the People of Colour. Their leader, Ogé, pressed for their admission to the National Assembly as regular members. The position of the mulattoes, he argued, was an indeterminate one. They were exempted from slavery but excluded from citizenship. The Assembly prevaricated and Ogé, impatient and indignant at delay and circumvention, returned to Santo Domingo. There he armed his slaves, exhorted the mulattoes to rise and fight against the French. The rebellion was suppressed, Ogé fled to a Spanish port, but the Spanish authorities handed him over to the French and he was broken on the wheel.

In 1791 France was on the brink of civil war. The new Assembly, dominated by Republicans, declared against any colour discrimination in the French Colonies. New commissioners who ardently championed the negroes and the mulattos were appointed to San Domingo and other French islands. The mutinous regulars incited the soldiers of Port au Prince to murder their French Colonel and defy the Government. The Assembly, in a laudable attempt to satisfy the mulattoes and their own principles of liberty, fraternity and equality, passed a decree bestowing equal rights on all mulattoes born of free parents. The decree, however, while satisfying certain elements in the mulatto population, infuriated the mulattoes born of mothers who were slaves. They enlisted the support of the slaves, massacred two thousand whites and destroyed all the prosperous plantations of the island.

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The French Royalists appealed to England for help. But the most that Pitt would concede, bound as he was by careful neutrality, was sanction to Jamaica to provide arms and provisions.

The news of the insurrection in Santo Domingo caused considerable anxiety in the British West Indies. There has been sympathetic insubordination among the slaves in Dominica. If this were the result of allowing the mulattos equal rights, what horrors must follow any relaxation of the laws which governed the negro slaves? The planters, the British merchants, strengthened their resistance, re-enforcing argument by example. Thus it was that when Wilberforce returned to the attack in 1792, and in a magnificent speech again stated his case for the Abolition, the House listened, doubted, and finally passed Dundas's amendment that the trade should be gradually abolished, and terminated by 1796. Colonel Tarleton, Liverpool's new Member, sought to create a favourable impression with both parties. Had not the trade been "an old established interest," he said, he himself would have opposed it.

Colonel Banastre Tarleton had unsuccessfully contested the seat in 1784. His gallant manner, his family, his loss of two fingers in the American War, availed him little against the charm of Lady Penrhyn, who was closely and influentially connected with Liverpool. Colonel Tarleton, however, had no intention of renouncing a parliamentary career. He was Liverpool's hero. His portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds had been hung in Liverpool's Academy—full length Colonel Tarleton with left foot on cannon breach, with a background of rearing horses and bulging banners.

"Tarleton, thy mind, above the poet's praise  
Asks not the laboured task of flatt'ring lays!"



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The author of *An Ode to Valour and Colonel Tarleton* would have done better to leave Colonel Tarleton's mental endowments unsung. He was totally unfitted to represent Liverpool, entirely ignorant as he was of mercantile matters, and, when he was returned at the head of the poll in 1790, he had neither the ability to further Liverpool's interests, nor even the doubtful merit of being able convincingly to defend the slave trade.

The House of Lords decided to hear the evidence again, but by the end of the year little had been accomplished.

In 1793, under the shadow of impending war with France, Wilberforce prepared to bring in his motion for the third time. He wrote to James Currie asking him to come to London, he required further information about the Liverpool slave trade and wished to hear Currie's opinion on the probable effect of war upon the trade. Currie wrote to him, and Wilberforce showed his letters to Pitt. On his return to Liverpool Currie heard with dismay that the French offers of negotiation had been rejected and war with France was inevitable, and Wilberforce reluctantly relinquished the motion for the abolition of the slave trade until a more propitious time.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SETTLEMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

THE Abolitionists had not confined themselves to collecting evidence and petitions to help Wilberforce. They had opened a fund to enable some hundreds of destitute negroes then in London—many of whom had fought for the British in the American War—to settle on the African Coast. King Naimbana, the African chief at the foot of the Sierra Leone, had been persuaded to sell a suitable tract of twenty square miles of coastline, the British Government to assume responsibility of transport and cost of the first six months' supplies, and, in the spring of 1787, 460 negroes and some whites sailed for Africa. The former slaves were in poor physical condition from the months of their precarious existence in London. Eighty-four died during the voyage, and in the first rains nearly one hundred more. The remnant started to build Freetown. But in their enthusiasm the philanthropists neglected to consider the effect which slavery had had upon the negroes they proposed to repatriate. They only saw oppressed black men banished from their land; young negroes born into slavery—every human right denied them—who should be living in splendid freedom with their tribes, who had the primary right to live on their own soil and among their own people. All that was needed, then, was a ship to carry them to land provided, some tools with

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which to cultivate this land, a few provisions to supplement the native foodstuffs.

But the negro slaves had never been permitted to exercise their wills, and through disuse will-power had atrophied. They had never been obliged to use their faculties in order to eat and live. They were fed and housed by the plantation owners. In Africa, primitive instinct to survive whetted senses, spurred enterprise. The African native lived constantly tuned to his immediate surroundings. He grew into the knowledge of wind and weather signs, of game-hunting, and food-seeking. Every tree, every rise or fall in land-contour had significance for him.

The negro settlers had come back to Africa, and to the well-meaning men who had enabled them to return, Africa was synonymous with home. But many of the older negroes who had been born in Africa were completely ignorant of the conditions in the Sierra Leone country: they had come from tribes hundreds of miles away. There was no familiarity to evoke response, to arouse forgotten knowledge.

Freedom was theirs, given by the white men who had robbed them of it, and they no longer knew how to use it. Their association with the white men had obliterated communal sense of responsibility, replaced it with the vices and not the virtues of civilisation. Many of the settlers were lazy, thriftless and depraved. They were inadequately supervised by men ignorant of the psychological difficulties involved. Some of the most incorrigible were actually sold as slaves by their fellows. A few were kidnapped by native slave traders and one settler absconded, preferring the more remunerative employment of slave dealing to that of struggling to plan and build a town.

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By some extraordinary and still unexplained negligence, several prostitutes had been permitted to accompany the settlers to Africa, degenerate white women whose presence caused constant quarrels and discontents. One of these wretched women explained that she had been taken, with others of her kind, by prospective customers to Wapping, there plied with drink and taken on board the ship and "married" to a negro. She herself admitted that she had been too drunk to remember anything that had happened the previous night, and the following morning, was obliged to enquire who her husband was. The women were promised a fine future in the colony, but after enduring the hardships of the rainy season, the fevers, the tropical heat and conditions in the improvised camp, the remaining seven sank into a state of apathy and filth. The worthier settlers had to contend, not only with their undesirable fellows, but with the opposition of the neighbouring slave factories and native slave dealers, who did their utmost to stir up animosity and suspicion among the tribes. When, at last, it seemed to the negroes and their patrons that they had succeeded in establishing themselves, the final blow fell.

King Jemmy, a native chief, who lived within half a mile of Freetown, averred that an American slave ship captain had unlawfully carried off two of his men. He had been waiting for opportunity of revenge. The American captain had escaped, the first American, therefore, to land in his territory would atone for his crime. Opportunity came with an American ship's boat slowly rowing upstream towards the nearby slave factory. King Jemmy and his men attacked and plundered it, killed three of the crew of four. The seaman who had escaped made his way along the river bank to the factory where he told his story to the agent. The factor, after consulta-

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tion with Captain Savage of H.M.S. Pomona, which was lying in the river, determined to punish the murderers. Ineffectual attempts were made to induce King Jemmy to come aboard the frigate, but when three days had passed and he did not come, the factor grew impatient and accompanied by a naval lieutenant and a body of sailors and marines, he set out for the native village. He took with him as guides two of the free negroes from the new settlement. The men from Freetown were reluctant and afraid. They protested that they did not want to be embroiled in the affair. But the factor refused to listen and they succumbed to insistence flanked by armed marines.

When news reached the king that a force of armed men was on its way to visit him, he and his people withdrew into the bush, and, unhindered, the sailors set fire to the deserted village. But King Jemmy had disposed his warriors along the path. They lay silent and still, watching for the party's return. At dusk the factor and his sailors took the path to the factory. They were satisfied with the facile success of their enterprize; only the negroes from Freetown were uneasy. Suddenly, without warning, musket shots were flying round them, the undergrowth on the path's edge surging and swaying. Before the sailors could load their muskets the lieutenant and the sergeant of marines were killed and Jemmy's men closed in on them, blocked the narrow path. Some of the sailors were wounded, but before the negroes withdrew they had lost several of their comrades.

King Jemmy now had excellent reason for another blood feud. He must avenge his followers. He held the factor to be chiefly responsible, but since that gentleman had considered it politic to leave the coast forthwith, Jemmy called a council of all the surrounding chiefs.

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The laws of just retribution demanded restitution from every person however remotely connected with the principal offender. Two men from the neighbouring colony had been among the hostile party, therefore the chief decided that Freetown should be burned. He sent word of his decision to the settlers. The two guides protested that they had become unwillingly and unwittingly involved. But King Jemmy regarded their participation as deliberate, and announced that he would give the settlers three days grace in which to remove themselves and their effects. The settlement burned and the colonists scattered.

Despite the disaster of the Freetown experiment, the Clapham Sect were determined to re-establish the free negroes on their own soil. In 1790 the St. George's Bay Association was founded for opening and furthering a trade in Africa's natural productions. In the following year an Act of Parliament was passed whereby the association was invested as a charter and incorporated as the Sierra Leone Company. Granville Sharp was elected president, Henry Thornton chairman, and Wilberforce and Grant were among the directors. The Directors intended to rally the scattered colonists of Freetown, and to that end they asked Alexander Falconbridge if he would undertake the reorganisation of the settlement and the task of taking out stores and equipment to the destitute colonists.

Early in January, 1791, Dr. Falconbridge, accompanied by his young wife and his brother, sailed in the Duke of Buccleugh, Captain McLean, for Sierra Leone. The Directors saw nothing ironical in their representative of freedom and civilisation sailing in a ship belonging to Messrs. Anderson, prosperous slave dealers of Philpot Lane and Bance Island. Throughout the

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voyage Falconbridge engaged the captain in violent argument about the slave trade and, since both were hot-tempered, Mrs. Falconbridge showed her disapproval by retiring to her cabin and her correspondence.

The Duke of Buccleugh made the African coast in eighteen days. Captain McLean dropped anchor in the river and saluted Bance Island with seven guns. The master of the British cutter Lapwing and some of the Freetown settlers came on board to see Falconbridge. The refugees told the story of King Jemmy's destruction of the settlement. They had lost everything, they said, and the agent of Bance Island factory had sold some of their companions to French slave captains. Falconbridge reserved judgment; the following evening he and his wife dined at the factory. Mrs. Falconbridge described the evening in a letter to her friend.

"At dinner the conversation turned upon the slave trade: Mr. Falconbridge, zealous for the cause in which he is engaged, strenuously opposed every argument his opponents advanced in favour of the *abominable* trade: the glass went briskly round, and the gentlemen growing warm, I retired immediately as the cloath was removed. The people on the island crowded to see me: they gazed with apparent astonishment—I suppose at my dress, for white women could not be a novelty to them, as there were several among the unhappy people sent out here by government, one of whom is now upon the island."

Mrs. Falconbridge subsequently learned with horror the history of the white women, whom she had taken to be the wives of convicts.<sup>1</sup> Her susceptibilities were destined to receive another shock that evening.

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Falconbridge evidently knew of the unsuccessful attempt made by the British Government to establish a convict colony on the West Coast of Africa.

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"Seeing so many of my own sex," she continued, "though of different complexion from myself, attired in their native garbs, was a scene equally new to me, and my delicacy, I confess, was not a little hurt at times. Many among them appeared of superior rank . . . nor was I wrong in my conjecture, for upon enquiring who they were, was informed one was the *woman* or *mistress* of Mr. — another of Mr. B——, and so on: I then understood that every gentleman on the island had his *lady*."

Anna Maria was invited by the agent to stay the night on the island. After nearly three weeks in a ship's bunk she was delighted at the prospect, but Falconbridge refused to hear of it. "I will not subject myself to any obligation to men possessing such diabolical sentiments," he roared, and Mrs. Falconbridge submitted to summary removal to the Lapwing.

But if she did not protest to her husband she vented her feelings on her friend. "It was not proper for me to contradict him at this moment, as the heat of argument and the influence of an over portion of wine had *quicken*ed and *disconcert*ed his temper: I therefore submitted without making any objection to come on board this tub of a vessel, which in point of size and cleanliness, comes nigher a hog-trough than anything else you can imagine."

Falconbridge lost no time in getting in touch with King Naimbana, through whose influence he hoped to re-establish the settlement and guarantee its safety. Robana was nine miles from Bance Island and the Falconbridges, who had been bidden to Naimbana's house, arrived at the town about ten o'clock. King Naimbana, who had expected his visitors later in the day, hastily retired to dress himself for the occasion. The Queen and Elliotte Griffiths, the king's secretary, welcomed them, and the queen exchanged courtesies with her visitors in broken



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English until the king returned. Half an hour later Naimbana appeared beaming above purple embroidered coat blazoned with a large star, white satin waistcoat and breeches, and white stockings harlequined with holes. He listened politely to Falconbridge, but averred that re-instatement of the settlers would be impossible without the concurrence of all the chiefs. Therefore a palaver would have to be held. Falconbridge, who knew that the success of his mission depended on Naimbana's co-operation, punctuated persuasion with rum, a few bottles of wine, a cheese, and finally a gold-laced hat, as symbol of the future prosperity which would most certainly accrue to His Majesty by the establishment of the St. George's Bay Company in his purlieus. King Naimbana was won. He would do all he could for his good friend King George, the palaver should be called. Mrs. Falconbridge, meanwhile, was overcoming with difficulty an intense desire to offer to mend the holes in His Majesty's stockings.

The Falconbridges were conducted round the village and the garden while the King's servants prepared dinner. The village appeared to consist of about twenty houses, all occupied, the King told them, by his wives and servants, except a few which he used as warehouses. They watched the King's slaves grinding the oil from the palm-nuts, and working in the King's garden, and finally returned to the Queen's house for the feast of tough chicken. Before dinner, however, Naimbana retired to change again into a scarlet robe embroidered with gold. The Queen stood behind her husband during the meal, eating an onion Anna Maria had given her. She ate with evident relish, occasionally indulging Naimbana with a bite. She stood, fat and placid, swathed in striped taffeta, decorated with gold native ornaments and strings

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of cheap trade beads. When she had finished her oration she sat down beside the King. After Falconbridge and Naimbana had reiterated their sentiments of mutual goodwill, the Falconbridges left in the dusk to return to Bance Island.

Two days later Falconbridge was summoned to attend the palaver and Anna Maria decided to accompany him, but her emotion and the vociferous chiefs overcame her and she had a fit of hysterics which interrupted the proceedings for some time.

After a delay of five days in which Mrs. Falconbridge was obliged to listen to her husband's angry mistrust of the chiefs, Naimbana sent word that they had consented to re-establish the settlers and to grant land to the St. George's Bay Company. As pledge of good faith he would send his son, John Frederic, to England, if Falconbridge would take him. Falconbridge assured the king that the Company would receive his son kindly and that John Frederic should sail with him when he left the coast.

Falconbridge had no time to lose in collecting the settlers and housing them. February was nearly spent and only three months of dry weather remained in which to clear their land, sow their crops and build their houses. The new settlement was to be named Granvilletown in honour of the Company's president. Upon the agreed site was a small village deserted by the inhabitants because they had believed it haunted. Falconbridge made it the nucleus of the new town. Forty-six of the settlers had taken refuge with a friendly chief—Pa Boson—in his up-river village, and these, recalled by Falconbridge, showed no unwillingness to occupy the haunted village. Falconbridge provided them with clothing and tools from the Lapwing and gave them a homily

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on manners, morals and the material benefits of the Company.

Mrs. Falconbridge selected the best hut for herself, and, when the Lapwing left, slept there in a rough bedstead, with a native mat hung over the doorway. She was a remarkable young woman with shrewd judgment and a sense of humour which enabled her to extract amusement from her own discomforts. She had married against her parents' wishes and was determined to make the best of life with Falconbridge wherever it might lead her, as much for her own satisfaction as for the contradiction of her parents' prognostications. Thus, writing to her friend of the settlers, the natives, the flora and fauna of Africa, all she remarks upon her own condition is: "I find it necessary to accomodate myself to whatever I meet with, there being but few conveniencies or accomodating things in this part of Africa."

The settlement grew. Part of the new storehouse was partitioned off for the Falconbridges, which they found cooler than the mud hut. The Company had instructed Falconbridge to build a fort; six pieces of cannon for its defence were in the Lapwing, but since the Directors had neglected to send any ammunition, they were perhaps impressive but of no practical use to the settlers. Falconbridge arranged a series of watches to guard the town, and sentries of his "militia" were always on duty.

The settlers were alarmed one day by shouts near the town, and Falconbridge armed his men and marched out in the direction of the disturbance. He discovered, however, that the negroes he met were not hostile to the colony, but were in the neighbourhood "panyaring." They had caught and chained one negro and were searching for more men to sell as slaves. Falconbridge harangued them for their "devilish deed" but was afraid

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to use force, and the wretched negro was taken off by his captors.

By the middle of June Falconbridge decided to return to England before the monsoon weather made departure dangerous and difficult. On 16th June he and Mrs. Falconbridge went to Robana to bid goodbye to King Naimbana and his wife and to fetch Prince John Frederic who was to accompany them. John Frederic was a short stout youth, with a broad flat nose and teeth filed sharp. He appeared in a faded gold-laced blue cloak, a black velvet jacket and white satin breeches which ill suited his bandy legs. He bore his mother's tearful farewells sullenly, but once aboard the Lapwing he showed a certain enthusiasm for his adventure, and although the Falconbridges found him "pettish and implacable" he won Anna Maria's good will sufficiently for her to teach him to read. After an adventurous passage home the Lapwing arrived at Penzance and Falconbridge immediately wrote to Granville Sharp to report his return. Sharp replied by return of post:

Leadenhall Street 7th Sept. 1791.

Dear Sir,

The agreeable account of the safe arrival of the Lapwing at Penzance, which I received this morning, gives me very particular satisfaction.

I have communicated your letter to Henry Thornton Esq., Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company . . . and to some of the Directors, and they desire you to come by land as expeditiously as you can, bringing with you in a postchaise, Mrs. Falconbridge and the Black Prince, and also any such specimens of the country as will not be liable to injury by land carriage.

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I enclose (from the Directors) a note from Mr. Thornton's house, for thirty pounds, for which you may easily procure cash for your journey. . . .

I remain with great esteem,

dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend,

And humble Servant,

Granville Sharp.

Mr. Alexander Falconbridge.

Falconbridge went to Falmouth to procure the money for his journey to London and there met the Rev. Thomas Clarkson, "that unwearied stickler for human liberty" as Mrs. Falconbridge irreverently called him. Clarkson told him that since considerable capital was available, the Company had decided to "render a very important service to the colony, by the acquisition of a number of free black colonists, acquainted with the English language, and accustomed to labor in hot climates."

The "free black colonists" were negroes who had emigrated to Nova Scotia after the American War. The Government had promised them grants of land, but, since the promise had never been fulfilled a delegation had come to England to press their claims. This seemed an excellent opportunity to enlist help for the settlement. Arrangements had been made forthwith and his brother, a naval lieutenant, had offered to go to Nova Scotia to make the necessary proposals and to superintend the collection and despatch of such of the Nova Scotian negroes who wished to return to Africa. Lieutenant Clarkson had already sailed for Nova Scotia.

Falconbridge thought the scheme premature. Granvilletown was, as yet, ill equipped to accommodate such a large number of new colonists.

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The Falconbridges and John Frederic travelled to London by stages. They were visited by Henry Thornton and Granville Sharp, who were anxious for detailed information about Granvilletown. Mr. Thornton invited Falconbridge to dine and John Frederic to stay with him until he was suitably equipped to go to the house of the clergyman who was to be his tutor.

The Director congratulated Falconbridge on his achievements; appointed him as Commercial Agent to the Company and tripled his salary. Falconbridge was hardly a suitable man to further the Company's commercial interests, "for Mr. Falconbridge was bred to physic, and men of perspicuity would have known how unfit such a person must be for a merchant," wrote Anna Maria Falconbridge, whose dislike of her husband was only surpassed by her subsequent danger and disgust with the Company. "Indeed," she continued, "he was aware of it himself, but it being a place of much expected profit, (a temptation not to be withstood), he was in hopes by application, soon to have improved the little knowledge he had, so as to benefit both his employers and himself." Mrs. Falconbridge's frank avowal of her husband's motives seems strangely at variance with the Company's declared aims which were not profits, but the civilisation of Africa and the abolition of the slave trade.

Mrs. Falconbridge was not easily persuaded to return to Africa with her husband, but the Directors had given Falconbridge a bonus, compensated her for the loss and damage of her property on the homeward voyage and assured her that, should any accident befall her husband, she would be well provided for by the Company. This concrete expression of esteem appealed to her. "Though all their rhetoric," she wrote, "could not persuade me to revisit Africa, their *noble, generous* actions have affected it."

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They also granted £50 wherewith to buy presents for King Naimbana and his consort. "I shall purchase those for the latter and present them as from myself, by way of enhancing my consequence," read her friend, with some misgivings as to the morality of Anna Maria's intention.

The Falconbridges sailed from Falmouth on 19th December, 1792, in the Company's ship the *Amy*. They arrived at Sierra Leone on 16th February and immediately sent messages to King Naimbana and King Jemmy. King Naimbana arrived on board and was shown a picture of his son and told of his progress. He showed his appreciation of the Company by staying five days in the ship. King Jemmy, however, could not be prevailed upon to leave his village. A meeting of the eight members of the Council, of whom Lieutenant Clarkson was to be the Superintendent, was called on board the *Amy*. The councillors, a chaplain, a secretary, an accountant and some "medical persons" together with fifty-nine clerks and servants had come direct from England, were awaiting the arrival of the settlers from Nova Scotia. The Company had realised the need for better organisation. But almost immediately disputes arose. Falconbridge asserted that the Directors' instructions, imparted through the Council, were diametrically opposed to those he had been given in London. To his wife he stormed of "chicanery and juggling" and vowed that the Company had enticed him to return as being the only man capable of securing land for the Nova-Scotians. His displeasure grew out of realisation that he was to be subordinate to Lieutenant Clarkson. He had no personal animosity towards Clarkson, who had not, indeed, at that time arrived in Africa. Subsequently Clarkson proved to be a popular and respected Governor. But Alexander Falconbridge had been in sole authority in Granville town, and

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his chagrin at finding himself serving under a man, who, however charming, was both younger and less experienced, is understandable.

In March the Nova-Scotian fleet arrived. It consisted of sixteen ships, carrying 1,131 negroes. Many of them were still ill from a fever first contracted at Halifax and of which sixty-five had already died. Clarkson, too, had been dangerously ill, and was weak and emaciated when he landed at Sierra Leone.

Yet another town was to be built. The land was cleared, the streets marked out by a surveyor, and the new colonists built rough temporary shelters until the land promised them had been surveyed. They camped under sails and tarpaulins from the ships, and ate scanty rations of salt meat and worm-eaten bread. In their report of 1794 the Directors glossed over the discords among the Council and Clarkson; the discontent of the European settlers; the lack of adequate provisions. They stressed the settlers' "eagerness to work," which could be interpreted as enthusiasm or anxiety, and dwelt on the town and land planning at some length. They had sent out a supply ship, the York, which had been lost, but sent no other immediately to replace it.

By June, of the 1,200 Freetown settlers over 700 were ill with fever. Six or seven died daily, until after nine months three-quarters of the European settlers were dead. Many of the colonists had been unable to finish watertight houses before the rains came, few had bedsteads, and they lay miserably on the wet floors of their dwellings without adequate food or medicines.

"I am surprised our boasted Philanthropists, the Directors of the Company should have subjected themselves to the censure they must meet, for sporting with the lives of such numbers of our fellow creatures, I mean by



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sending so many here at once, before houses, materials for building, or other conveniences were prepared to receive them, and for not hurrying a supply after they had been guilty of this oversight," wrote Mrs. Falconbridge, who had, to her own surprise, retained all her health and energy.

It is remarkable that the Directors of the Company were so unsuccessful in their attempts at adequate organisation. They had the methodical equipping of the successfully established convict settlement at Sydney Cove of 1787 as example, had they wished to study it.

The letters of Captain Arthur Phillip, commodore of the fleet, and first Governor of the Sydney Cove settlement, demonstrate an attention to detail, a desire to be prepared for all eventualities, which the Sierra Leone Company would have done well to imitate.

Falconbridge had had little opportunity of "improving by application" the little commercial ability he possessed, and when finally the Directors gave him permission to act independently of Clarkson and the Council he was too ill to enjoy his freedom. He was, however, determined to take full advantage of his new liberty of action. But within three weeks the Company's ship arrived from England bringing much needed stores and a Mr. Wallis to take his place. Falconbridge had crawled out of bed and was preparing for his first trading voyage when he received the news. He had been unsatisfactory . . . he had failed to extend the Company's commercial interests. . . .

Falconbridge habitually drank too much, and now in his humiliation and impotent anger he drank steadily and fatally. He died a few days later, unregretted by Mrs. Falconbridge, who married again scarcely three months later.

In January, 1793, old King Naimbana fell ill. The settlers were concerned, rather from personal than altru-

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istic considerations. The King had always been friendly, and his attitude had influenced that of the lesser chiefs. Mr. Dawes and Mr. Gilbert the physician visited him, but despite the remedies with which he was treated, Naimbana died the following month.

When John Frederic received news of his father's death he left his tutor and sailed for Africa. He had worked hard and, according to the Directors' report, his behaviour while in England had been exemplary. He was most anxious to take his two clerical tutors back to Africa with him to convert his fellow-countrymen. He sailed alone, however. It may be that the clergymen were reluctant to leave comfortable country parsonages for the discomforts of barbarous Africa.

John Frederic sailed from Plymouth. He was depressed and uneasy. He foresaw opposition to the progressive changes he planned to introduce to Sierra Leone. The cool weather left behind, John Frederic complained of headaches and dizziness. He contracted fever and when the ship arrived at Sierra Leone he was unconscious. He was carried ashore to the Governor's house and the old Queen came with numerous relatives to see him. He died a few hours later, and then it was that a negro who had travelled in the same ship, announced that the captain had poisoned John Frederic with a cup of tea. The witchdoctors were summoned forthwith. They propped the corpse upright and muttered incantations before it. Was the Governor guilty? The crowd of relatives craned forward, eagerly watching the body. But the dead man remained motionless. Was the Company guilty? Was the ship's servant guilty? Was the captain guilty? The head, imperfectly supported, sagged on to the still shoulder. The witchdoctor stepped back triumphantly. The crowd groaned with satisfied indignation.

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The Superintendent and the Council received a letter demanding compensation for the murder. The family handsomely suggested that the captain had been influenced by slave captains, and that the Company was not to blame for the poisoned cup of tea. Nevertheless, at the palaver which followed the Queen demanded of the Company 600 copper bars, and trial by red water, should the captain deny the charge. The captain looked uncomfortable at this suggestion, but to his relief a roar of laughter from the negroes round him sufficiently assured him that they did not expect his compliance. The Governor finally established the captain's innocence, and the Queen was so completely convinced, that, next morning, she delivered another of the late king's numerous sons to the Governor to educate.

Lieutenant Clarkson returned home in January, 1793, and the Nova-Scotians who had only been prevented from voicing their discontents by their trust in him, told the new Superintendent, Dawes, that they were dissatisfied with the treatment accorded to them. They had settled on temporary lots near the sea, these lots were cut off from the coast by new buildings, this was directly contrary to the promises made to them.

"Mr. Clarkson," they said, "promised in Nova Scotia that no distinction should be made here between us and white men; we now claim this promise. We are free British subjects, and expect to be treated as such. Why are not our allotments surveyed? Why are not all the Company's promises to us fulfilled?"

The Council replied that Lieutenant Clarkson was in the habit of making prodigal and extraordinary promises in no way authorised by the Company. In all probability he was drunk when he made them.

The Nova-Scotians decided to send two delegates to

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England to protest to the Directors. In November Isaac Anderson and Cato Perkins arrived in England. After some difficulty they traced Clarkson and appealed to him for help. Clarkson wrote to the Directors asking them to receive him and the negro delegates. "I am induced to take this method to convince the people of your Colony, that I have done all in my power, since I have been in England, to forward the performance of the promises I made them. . . . I cannot bear to be suspected by them, or the inhabitants of Nova Scotia," he wrote to Henry Thornton.

The Directors told the delegates that a ship was leaving for Sierra Leone immediately and suggested that they should return at once to Africa and that when they had embarked they should have an answer to their petition. But Anderson and Perkins were adamant. They wrote again to Thornton and the Directors begging to have their grants for the land they occupied and for a promise in writing for the remainder. "When we are able, we shall consider ourselves bound to contribute what we can, towards defraying the expenses of the Colony; but this can never be the case until you fulfil your promises to us; at present you are obliged to give us daily wages to do work, from which no advantage can ever be derived, either to the Company or the Settlers." They protested, too, against the autocratic government of the settlement. The letter courteously and reasonably set forth their grievances.

The Directors then demanded a detailed enumeration of Clarkson's promises, and when the delegates declared that they had been told that they would receive a grant of land of twenty acres to each family, tools for cultivation and the necessaries of life at a reasonable price, and equal rights with the white men, they replied that "the Court

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consider the petition of the Nova-Scotians as hasty, and the facts therein mentioned as chiefly founded on mistake and misinformation."

Two months later Perkins and Anderson returned to Sierra Leone. The Directors had been obliged to pay for their maintenance while in England although they termed them "disrespectful and vehement." The dispute, they reported, had been "settled, after some degree of concession on the part of the Company."

In their report of 1795, however, they tacitly admitted mismanagement in seeking to contradict the Nova-Scotians' allegations. There had been "unlooked for expenses"; inefficiency and wastefulness among the first councillors; the rainy season; the unproductiveness of the land adjoining the town, the necessity of "acting upon probabilities." Such statements only too clearly showed that the Directors had not profited by former experience. In August, 1794, two more delegates were sent to remonstrate with the Board. Clarkson and the Nova-Scotians had legitimate cause for complaint since the promises had been authorised by the Company and, in fact, appeared in the Directors' report of 1794 in which the Nova-Scotian protest is cursorily mentioned, while the answer to it is given verbatim.

But the settlers temporarily forgot their internal disputes when on the evening of 27th September, 1794, they heard the sound of gunfire at sea. Hitherto they had been absorbed in their own affairs, the war with France had seemed remote, now they gathered on the shore, eagerly searching the horizon. But in the failing light the sea lay calm and empty. Next morning the settlers awoke to find eight sail in sight. The vessels flew the British flag, but Zachary Macaulay, who had succeeded Mr. Dawes as Governor, was uneasy. The enemy, he knew, frequently

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sailed under false colours. He hastily dressed, sent messengers to call the councillors. Before the Council could do more than decide that resistance, in the contingency of enemy attack, would be useless, the frigates with fair wind and flowing tide were close enough for them to see a gunner training his gun on the house. There was a roar, and smoke hid the vessel. When it cleared the colonists saw that the British colours had been struck. The French had come. A white flag was run up before the Governor's house, but the frigates' guns rained grape and musket shot on the town. A negro child was killed, some men wounded. The streets were full of settlers fleeing with what they could carry to the shelter of the bush.

At ten o'clock the French began to land. The firing had ceased. Macaulay sent word to the French commodore, inviting him to a parley. But his envoy returned with news that the sailors were pillaging and burning the town led by two American slaver captains, Newell and Mariner, who had piloted the French ships. The sailors were under their control; the officers were too busy to hear him. Finally Macaulay succeeded in reaching the ship of the commodore, Citizen Allemand. He was permitted to come aboard, was taken to the cabin. Macaulay, as Governor of the settlement, protested indignantly that his flag of truce had been ignored, that a defenceless town had been bombarded, and was now being sacked and destroyed by gangs of seamen.

Citizen Allemand listened in silence.

"Have you removed any property?" he asked.

"No."

"Be careful of what you say to me, for if I find you have removed anything I shall make you suffer, and there shall not be a hut left in the place."

When Macaulay had again assured him that the settlers

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had neither taken nor hidden stores or valuables, Allemand promised to put a stop to the looting. Macaulay protested that a great deal of damage had been done.

Citizen Allemand shrugged his shoulders: "Citoyen celà peut bien être. Mais encore vous êtes Anglais." He rose, and Macaulay knew that he could do no more.

He was rowed ashore, met seamen staggering under bales of cottons, cases of provisions. In the town destruction and confusion were worse even than he had represented. The seamen, led by Newell, had rolled wine casks into the streets and broached them there. They stood laughing at the drunken braggings of Leman, a black settler who had been imprisoned for selling a negro to a slave trader. He had been freed, dressed in a silk suit which Macaulay had intended for a native chief, and plied with drink. He stood swaying, ruffles and satin already wine and sweat stained. Macaulay made his way to the Government buildings. In the accountant's office desks and drawers splintered and torn to pieces; money and papers gone. In the botanist's orderly laboratory his feet crushed littered seeds beneath torn remnants of careful drawings, of valuable books. Everywhere ruin confronted him. The telescopes, barometers, wantonly destroyed, the printing press damaged, the fount tossed away.

The settlers had disappeared and Macaulay, sick at heart, fled to Granvilletown. Meanwhile the Sierra Leone Company's ship, the Harpy, laden with stores and equipment for the colony, sighted land. It was too late when she saw the frigates anchored off the town; she was pursued and she and her cargo, worth £10,000, were captured. The Frenchmen then sailed to Bance Island and destroyed the factory, and finally, on 13th October, after putting ashore at Freetown 120 of the English sea-

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men whom they had captured and a few provisions, they sailed away with the Harpy.

The Company had lost £55,000 worth of property in three weeks. Nevertheless, as soon as the news reached England they despatched another ship with adequate stores and goods to enable the settlers to resume life in the town. In a surprisingly short time schools, church, hospital and dwellings were rebuilt, and henceforward the colony prospered. The Nova-Scotians, who were "most eminently found to fail in the regulation and command of their tempers", composed their differences and lived peaceably for six years. Then they rebelled against the introduction of new maroon colonists from Nova Scotia, but soldiers from the colonists' ship quelled the insurrection and the Governor finally put an end to discord by banishing the ringleaders. For three years longer the colony maintained its independence. In 1803 the Company handed over Sierra Leone to the British Government, which had already found this method of colonisation by private enterprise eminently satisfactory. Thereby the Empire acquired a colony full-fledged without pecuniary loss or outlay. Short-sighted and lacking in efficient organisation though they had been, the determination of the Directors, the tenacity of Granville Sharp, and the courage of the councillors and governors themselves, had finally achieved a prosperous and peaceful colony.



## CHAPTER XIV

### WEST INDIAN SOCIETY AND THE ABOLITION

THE reports of Wilberforce's and Pitt's speeches on the slave trade in 1789 were received with indignant concern in the West Indies. The British-owned islands foresaw, in the imminent threat of abolition, certain disaster and ruin. Were the importation of slaves forbidden, it would be impossible to furnish adequate estate labour from the slaves and their progeny already living in the West Indies. The planters argued that women slaves had always been difficult to procure; that those bought or bred were promiscuous, bore few children because of their mode of life; and that infant mortality was high owing to the mothers' ignorance and injudicious feeding. They did not refer to the countless negroes who were unable to survive the "seasoning." The old-established planters might survive a few years with such stocks of negroes as they possessed, but what of the many immigrants who were developing their land, who were heavily in debt to the London and Liverpool merchants, to local traders? How could they expect ever to discharge their obligations?

In the West Indies, they maintained, the advocates of emancipation for the slaves were humane but ignorant men. Men who had inherited sugar estates which they had never seen. These absentee landlords had since become convinced that the abolition of slavery would not

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compass the negroes' happiness. Had not the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, by the device of Colonel Codrington, found itself owner of slave-worked plantations? And had it not purchased "from the purest and best motives" a certain number of negroes to divide labour and maintain stock? The Society recognised that "moderate labour, unaccompanied with that wretched anxiety to which the poor of England are subject, . . . is a state of comparative felicity . . . and that persuasion is lost on such men, and compulsion, to a certain degree, is humanity and charity."

The question of the psychological effect of the abolition of the slave trade upon the slaves and mulattos also pre-occupied the planters and the legislative body. The news of the rebel Oge's activities in Santo Domingo had been alarming. If the result of merely considering the possibility of reform had led to insurrection in the French colony, there could be no doubt in their minds that, were the Bill for abolition to be passed in the English Parliament, not only their fortunes, but their lives would be endangered. They had not forgotten the Ballard's Valley rising of 1760, when, led by Tacky, a Koromantyn negro, one hundred newly-imported slaves belonging to Trinity Estate in the parish of St. Mary, revolted. In the middle of the night they had attacked the fort at Port Maria, killed the sentry and equipped themselves, and other slaves who had joined them, from the armoury.

Zachary Bayly, the owner of Trinity Estate, had slept that night at the house of his neighbour at Ballard's Valley. He had inspected his new slaves that evening, and, satisfied with his purchase and complacent after Mr. Cruickshank's good dinner, had retired to bed and fallen asleep, when a servant brought news that the negroes had risen,

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were marching armed and excited towards the house.

As he dressed, Bayly advised Cruickshank, his friends and white servants, to collect all the firearms they possessed and meet at a house nearby, which offered better chances of defence. He himself would ride out to find the rebels and try to reason with them. He and his servant met the whole wild gang streaming down the hill in the moonlight near the overseer's house. He reined his twisting rearing horse, waved his hat, his voice beaten by their war-cries. But the negroes were free at last to wreak revenge on their white captors, they were triumphant and blood-thirsty. They answered Bayly with a volley of musket fire which killed his servant's horse and he had barely time to rescue him and ride off. The negroes surged on to surround the overseer's house, where they killed every white man and mulatto they could find and drank their blood mixed with rum. By daylight they had killed forty mulattoes and whites—men, women and children. They were surprised at Haywood Hall roasting an ox in the burning building, dancing, drunk and noisy, in the smoky glare. Bayly had mustered 130 white men and trustworthy negroes and they killed nine of the rebels, took several prisoners and pursued the rest into the woods, where Tacky was shot. Three of the ringleaders were condemned to death. It was decided to "make examples" of them. One was chained to an iron stake and burned alive; the two others were hung up in chains and left to die. This was the only treatment the negroes understood. They must be rendered submissive by fear, since they interpreted kindness as weakness. The men who supported the Abolition in England had no experience of the negroes, were ridiculously biased in their favour. Thus, the planters.

On 19th November, 1789, a conference between the

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Council and the Assembly of Jamaica was called at St. Iago de la Vega (Spanish Town) to discuss "the steps necessary to be taken in consequence of the information received from the Agent of this Island of the proceedings . . . during the last session of Parliament in respect of the Slave Trade." The Joint Committee expressed their surprise and concern that Mr. Wilberforce had been supported—encouraged even—by "many persons in high trust and authority under the Crown," and particularly by Mr. Pitt, who had not only advocated immediate and unqualified abolition, but had stated that, in his opinion, the plantation owners should expect no compensation for losses entailed thereby. Fresh evidence was being collected, and the Committee suggested that a petition should be drawn up, to vindicate the honour and humanity of the white people of the Sugar Islands, and to demonstrate how abolition of the slave trade would irretrievably ruin them.

Mr. Bryan Edwards then rose and, despite his statement that they had been assailed by obloquy, outrage and such calumnies that could only be properly returned by "silent contempt" spoke fluently and at great length. He dealt ruthlessly with the Abolitionists. "These attempts to blacken a whole community," he thundered, with unfortunate choice of metaphor, since through the efforts of many of the gentlemen present the colony had already achieved a richer hue, "are not merely the base efforts of obscure persons and anonymous calumniators, but of men of education and appearance in life." Clarkson, he said, was responsible for the most outrageous and atrocious calumnies. He had discovered where Clarkson had obtained his material. Most of it derived from the Quaker Benezet and from Granville Sharp. These men had studied Sir Hans Sloane's history of Jamaica. Sir

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Hans had come to the island in the reign of James II and left in 1688. In his day the white population had consisted of disbanded Roundheads, planters and pirates who were joined by renegade Dutch and Frenchmen—the Buccaneers. He held no brief for the Buccaneers. Slaves were well treated. They were kept under control, but the security of the whites had to be ensured. The massacres of Hanover and Ballard's Valley would never be repeated.

He recalled to the Committee how the slaves of Hanover Parish had risen against their employer in his absence, abducted his wife, whom the ringleader proposed to keep as his mistress instead of murdering her as the other slaves wished, and how her child had been "cleft in twain with a hatchet" before her eyes and how she had been rescued alive but insane.

Despite the dangerous nature of the slaves, the Acts passed by the legislature of Jamaica during the past ten years had been framed to protect them. They were "written in characters of justice mercy and liberality."

Wilberforce and Pitt he handled with a more cautious tongue: he could not afford to antagonise them. "Mr. Pitt is a young man and with the generosity, has perhaps the credulity of youth." He had, he continued, been misled. He was entirely ignorant of the financial damage Wilberforce's proposed measures would entail. He and Wilberforce lacked sufficient and correct information. They had been prejudiced by "interested persons." Point by point he replied to Wilberforce's indictments. The mortality of seamen in the Guinea trade was admittedly high, but, and his manner appealed to all men of commonsense, Mr. Wilberforce should consider how vast a number of seamen were employed by the slave trade. The negroes too, consumed 100,000 barrels

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of salt fish in a year and thereby created employment and trade in the Newfoundland fisheries. Mr. Wilberforce had made no mention of the death rate of miners, or coastal traders. As men "not deficient in the amiable virtues of generosity and compassion" the Committee resolved that the slave trade was not particularly destructive to seamen and that the indictment was partial and unjust.

The slave trade, Bryan Edwards admitted, fomented wars and oppression in Africa and if all the nations agreed, it would be possible to abolish the traffic in slaves, but if one nation alone desisted the consequences would be horrible: slaves would become cheaper, and the African brokers and chiefs would kill many more slaves and become "more regardless for the lives of their captives." Upon this point the Committee unanimously resolved that the direct or virtual suppression of the slave trade by Britain alone "would not promote the purposes of humanity."

The losses in the Middle Passage? They were a "remediable grievance" and no argument for the abolition of the trade. Most of them were due to epidemic or "to the improvident misconduct of the owners," as Mr. Edwards euphemistically described lack of food and water.

Slaves were bound to decrease. In Jamaica there were 250,000 slaves and men far outnumbered women, and with the decrease of slaves the 600,000 acres of sugar could not be adequately cultivated, since the physique of the white man was unsuited to field labour in the hot climate.

The Committee, after hearing Mr. Edwards, agreed that all he had said confirmed the need for convincing the British Parliament that, should the slave trade be abolished, the unsettled land would be abandoned and that the planters would justly claim compensation. Therefore a protest must be made.

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Despite the segregation of the slaves, their total lack of right or responsibility in the island, negroes indirectly influenced the social life of the community. As early as 1695 Père Labat referred to the general practice of the French planters to take negro mistresses into their houses, and as late as 1802 Lady Nugent, wife of the Governor of Jamaica, wrote in her journal: "It is extraordinary to witness the immediate effect that the climate and habit of living in this country have upon the minds and manners of Europeans. . . . In the upper ranks they become indolent and inactive . . . and are almost entirely under the domination of their mulatto favourites." The white women in the island told her many stories of the influence of "black and yellow" women; and the mistresses of the overseers and planters entertained her in the houses of the estate owners she visited and told her their histories. Many she found to be daughters of members of the Assembly and of Government officials. At the house of one planter, whom she described as an old bachelor who detested the society of women, a little mulatto girl with straight light-brown hair and black eyes was sent into the drawing-room to amuse her. Her host seemed somewhat embarrassed when he found the child with her and hurriedly dismissed her. Lady Nugent was subsequently told by the housekeeper that the child was his, and that he had a numerous mulatto family, indeed his offspring were to be found on most of his estates.

The mulatto women seldom married men of their own colour. It was their ambition to be the "housekeeper" of a white man, and as such to bear him children. The mulatto housekeepers were skilled in cookery, in preserving and cake-making. Where white women were few they gave the white men comfort in their homes, and, many of them, a faithful companionship.

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The planters lived comfortably. Low, roomy, sparsely furnished houses of mahogany wood; galleried, piazzaded, porticoed; with tamarind trees and coconut palms, breaking the line of nearby sugar works, the stretches of cane-field. There were groves of tattered bananas, oranges and mango trees; ochra plots and taro patches; vegetable gardens where turkeys and chickens strutted and picked. Everywhere profusion. Flowers, vegetables, fowls, brown children, and noisy good-humoured prodigality. The negro house-servants slept at nights, or during the hot afternoons, on the verandah floors, in the passages. The mulatto women chattered and bickered, cooked rich heavy meals; breakfast with chocolate mixed with eggs, laced with Madeira; cassava cakes, fruits. Second breakfast of pigeon pies, tongues, rounds of beef, quail and goose, ginger sweetmeats and jellies. Distances between the plantations required visitors to spend the day, and often the night, after a dinner of barbecued pig—filled with pepper and spices, cooked in plantain leaves—turtle swimming in rich green fat and spiced sauce; sangaree and rum-punch. So hospitable were the planters that there were no decent inns to be found in the island.

Lady Nugent, after her tour round the island wrote: "I am not astonished at the general ill health of the men in this country; for they really eat like comorants and drink like porpoises." She had never in her life seen such appetites. She had come from Georgian England where meals, according to present-day standards of health and hospitality, were habitually too long and too lavish, but Jamaica's variety and capacity astounded her. But she did not appear to have realised that the visit of the Governor and his lady to remote plantations was an event which demanded special celebration.



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At Mr. Simon Taylor's, the richest planter in the island, Lady Nugent retired to her room to read Dodd's *Reflections Upon Death* after sitting through an enormous meal and contemplating the table decoration of a wild-boar shoulder arabesqued with forcemeat.

Matthew Lewis, arriving at Cornwall, his Jamaican estate, was struck by an intelligent-looking mulatto woman, who appeared to have authority in the house. He asked his attorney if she was one of his slaves. "No," he replied, "she is a free woman."

"Is she in my service?" asked Lewis.

"No," replied the attorney.

"But what *does* she do on Cornwall? What use is she in the house?" Lewis was growing impatient.

The attorney looked down, "Why, Sir, as to use . . . of no great use, Sir," and then, after a pause. "It is the custom, Sir, in this country for unmarried men to have housekeepers, and Nancy is mine."

But Mr. Lewis soon found that the attorney had modestly underrated Nancy's capabilities. She nursed the negro children, visited the sick slaves in the estate hospital, and could dispense medicines with a skill that equalled the doctors. She was by no means exceptional, for the mulatto women were noted for their kindness to the indigent and sick. The mulatto girls regarded the position of "housekeeper" as a responsible and dignified one, and Bryan Edwards wrote of them: "the terms of their compliance . . . are commonly as decent, though perhaps not as solemn, as those of marriage; and the agreement they consider equally innocent; giving themselves up to the husband (for so he is called) with faith plighted, with sentiment and with affection."

The white men usually treated their mistresses kindly, and indeed, frequently completely surrendered household

authority to them. The children of these unions were usually apprenticed to mulatto craftsmen, or became clerks or overseers on the estates, the girls domestic servants. They considered themselves vastly superior to the negroes or mulatto children of socially inferior whites. They were accorded the title of "Mr." or "Miss" and enjoyed great and freely accorded social distinction in brown society. Children born of a slave mother were frequently given their freedom. But a freed slave was not allowed to assume the civil and political rights of a born freeman. Many plantation owners had a real affection for their children and felt responsible for their welfare. They would leave them money or property, even slaves, but by an Act passed by the Jamaica Assembly in 1762 the value of the property bequeathed to any mulatto born out of wedlock might not exceed £2,000 in value. Since, however, many members of the Assembly were personally affected by this law, private Acts were sometimes passed, according to Bryan Edwards, to authorise "gentlemen of fortune, under particular circumstances, to devise their estates to their reputed Mulatto children, notwithstanding the act of 1762."

The mulattoes usually made harsh masters. Matthew Lewis left an account in his journal of a free mulatto named Rolph who had been left seven slaves by a white man. He cultivated a tract of land remote from the eye of the supervisor whose duty it was to see that the slaves were properly treated and to investigate their complaints. Rolph was reputed to be a cruel master, but nothing could be proved against him until he killed one of his slaves in a fit of anger. Despite the accounts of eye-witnesses he was not punished, since the law admitted of no slave giving evidence in the Courts and no white man had been present at the time.

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✠ The estate owner's house was the home of his children, his mistress helped or hindered him and thus it was that African influences had become woven into the fabric of domestic life in the islands. But there appears to have been little discontent among the mulattoes of the British-owned islands; no concerted demand for rights and privileges as there had been in the French West Indies, although Bryan Edwards frankly admitted that the position of the mulattoes was an unfortunate one. They were frequently scorned by intellectually inferior white men, "their progress and civility is animated by no encouragement; their attachment is received without approbation; and their diligence exerted without reward." Legal marriages were more frequent among the planters of the French islands, due in all probability to the influence of the Catholic Church and the penalisation of the parents of bastard mulatto children. The children of these legal unions may have been more conscious of their inferior status in the colony, and, considering themselves entitled by birth to the rights accorded to white men, had become indignant and dissatisfied with their position.

The mulatto offspring of a negress slave enjoyed no social privilege. They were, according to the laws passed in 1674 in the French West Indies, the property of their masters and could not be sold to their white fathers. They were subject to the same rules and ordinances as the negro slaves and the penalty for absconding was the loss of both ears and imprisonment, for the second offence, and if they again attempted escape the culprits were hamstrung.

Père Labat affirmed that both the Frenchmen he knew who had married negresses had done so only at the dictates of their conscience.

A lieutenant of the Militia named Lietard married a

fine-looking negress "par un principe de conscience," he wrote, and continued with relish: "à qui selon les apparences il avoit quelque obligation." Lietard lived contentedly among an ever-increasing family of sturdy brown children and the marriage proved a happy one. But the Provençal merchant Isautier, who had been finally driven by the priest to regularise his union with a negress, was less fortunate. Janneton Panel, his wife, "would have had more husbands than the woman of Samaria," wrote Père Labat, "had all those married her to whom she had abandoned herself."

Society ostracised Isautier, not because he had married a negress, but because he had married a harlot. He was a gregarious man, and finally left Janneton, who was well content with material wealth acquired and the name of Mademoiselle Isautier.

Père Labat, during his sojourn in the West Indies, had known of but one white woman who had become infatuated with a negro. The girl was the daughter of a French carpenter, and, when she could conceal her pregnancy no longer, she confessed to him that she wished to marry one of his slaves, who was the father of her child. The carpenter hurriedly sought Père Labat, who advised him to sell the slave and send the daughter away for her confinement. The carpenter, however, disregarded the priest's advice and charged his slave before the Intendant with the assault and rape of his daughter. But if he had hoped thus to rid himself of the stigma, his purpose was frustrated by his daughter, who persisted in her declaration that she had been solely responsible and that she wished to marry the negro. Her father was forced to withdraw his accusation and re-establish himself in the eyes of the community as best he could by selling the slave and marrying his daughter to an obliging Polish tradesman.

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The relation of black and white. It had become the constant preoccupation of both the social and economic life of the West Indies. Out of increasing prosperity grew fresh problems, fresh discontents. As the years passed there developed the problem of the half-caste and his place in society, of the quaderoon, the tercerone, the mestize. By severity and constant influx of new blood, the slaves could be kept—unquestioning, ignorant “stock” for the estates. But the fusion of white with negro blood, gradually and imperceptibly changed the character of West Indian social life. White and black characteristics and traits, merged, absorbed; transmuted, magnified, decreased. In describing contemporary West Indian life Bryan Edwards wrote that the society which emerged, at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, was physically and morally deficient in strength and stability.

“It is indeed melancholy,” wrote Lady Nugent, “to see the general disregard of both religion and morality throughout the whole island. Everyone seems solicitous to make money, and no one appears to regard the mode of acquiring it.” The well-to-do, she maintained, were uninterested in all but eating, drinking and indulgence. It was habitual for the bachelor white men to keep mulatto mistresses, and the lower orders were “the same, with the addition of conceit and tyranny; considering the negroes as creatures formed merely to administer to their ease, and to be subject to their caprice.”

The Church seems to have had little influence at this period. Most of the planters put every obstacle they could in the way of the missionaries who sought to teach the slaves to read and write. The catechists, so long as they confined themselves to viva voce methods, were tolerated. The clergymen of the various parishes made no

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secret of the fact that they made a traffic of their livings. They had good stipends, various emoluments and perquisites.

Mr. Wedderburn, the owner of Paradise Estate in Jamaica, in gratitude to his overseer who had successfully cracked his whip and maintained order in the cane-fields and sugar works for several years, purchased for him the living of Savannah la Mar. The overseer was subsequently ordained by the Bishop of Man, exchanged whips for metaphorical scorpions.

When Sir George and Lady Nugent attended the church of Black River, for Easter Sunday service, they found the behaviour of the congregation and of the officiating clergyman extremely disconcerting. Before the Communion Service began all the congregation but three people left, and a stranger suddenly walked into the Nugents' pew and invited the Governor to visit him. General Nugent "very civilly declined" while Lady Nugent, in silent protest, kept her eyes on her prayer book. Her husband imitated her dignified reproof and opened his, but the gentleman still continued an animated monologue. Finally the priest stood ready to begin the prayers and General Nugent broke in upon the visitor's dissertation:

"Pray, Sir, do you stay for the Communion?"

The gentleman finally seemed aware that he was not appreciated. "No, oh, no," he replied and bowed himself out into the aisle.

But the Governor and his wife were completely taken aback when, at the altar steps, the clergyman turned to them and asked them obligingly if they would not prefer him to bring the bread and wine to their pew, since it was very hot, and paused during the prayers to enquire whether Lady Nugent would not like a window open. He did not seem at all abashed at their horrified refusals.

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But there were priests, and other members of the professional classes in the West Indies, who deplored the laxity of morals and intellectual apathy of the majority of Creoles, both white and mulatto.

"The indolence, of which they are accused," wrote Bryan Edwards, "is rather an aversion to serious thought and deep reflection, than a slothfulness and sluggishness of nature. Both sexes when the springs of the mind are set in motion, are remarkable for a warm imagination and a high flow of spirits." That this flow was chiefly directed towards "a promptitude for pleasure" Edwards did not deny. The historians of eighteenth-century West Indian life were unanimous in their condemnation of the morals of the planters, who took negro or mulatto mistresses and bred children for whom they were in no way legally responsible. No white man, unless urged by the temptation of a considerable fortune, would condescend to marry a mulatto. Bryan Edwards deplored the position of the mulatto women, who, he says, were deserving of a better status and legal recognition. He advocated enfranchisement of those who were slaves, "Christian instruction" and encouragement in their various professions. The Reverend Mr. Ramsay, who had been associated with the administration of Codrington, was one of the few enlightened priests who openly advocated the emancipation of children born of white fathers. According to his plan the funds for their education and maintenance were to be provided by the fathers and deposited with the churchwardens. Intendants were to be appointed to supervise the young mulattos' apprenticeship to such a trade as conformed to their aptitude and the colony's need. "By these means," he wrote, "the number of free citizens would increase in the colonies and add to their security and strength. A new rank of citizens,

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placed between the Black and White races, would be established.”

But the eighteenth century was not destined to see such reforms. The growth of vested interests opposed the slightest concession to the slaves, and the excesses of the Santo Domingo mulattoes encouraged by the French republicans’ doctrine of liberty, equality and fraternity were reasons enough for the West Indian administration to refuse consideration of the mulatto cause.



## CHAPTER XV

### LESSONS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

**I**N the year 1793 England was again at war with France, and Wilberforce was forced to postpone his motion, and Abolitionists and reformers alike were branded and shunned as Jacobins.

The growing discontent among the intellectuals in France had received impetus and support from the French soldiers returned from America, imbued with confused ideas of democratic reform which quickly coalesced under experienced leadership. The pace had quickened. In 1789 the States General had met for the first time since 1614. The French revolution had begun. The powers of Ministers and Crown absorbed: the King imprisoned in the Tuileries; the Bastille rased. In England the news was received with enthusiasm.

"How much," cried Fox, "is this the greatest event that ever happened in the world; and how much the best." Even the pacific Wordsworth exclaimed on the bliss of being alive "that dawn," and in Liverpool William Roscoe composed a lyric to celebrate the Bastille's fall and the rise of the "day-star of Liberty."

But the guillotine severed English political parties as finally as noble French heads. Whigs and Tories transformed to Democrats and Aristocrats. Fox lauded the Revolution, Burke, his friend no longer, inveighed

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against the republicans in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Tom Paine challenged Burke rudely and forcibly and Sir James Mackintosh, in the well-turned elegance of *Vindiciae Gallicae*, proved to his own satisfaction that excess was natural concomitant of revolutionary movement.

In 1792 England learned with consternation that Louis XVI had been deposed; of the Brunswick manifesto and the final destruction of the monarchy. The Tower of London fortified and guarded; the militia called out; Parliament summoned for 3rd December; and the Liverpool Merchants joining the merchants and bankers of England in pledging parchment loyalty to His Majesty King George.

Liverpool was exceedingly prosperous: 123 ships trading to Africa; 22,402 tons, and a slave to each two tons. The merchants' eyes leapt the Guinea Coast, swept across Africa to the rich fields of East Indian enterprise. Why should they be excluded? Meetings at the Exchange; resolutions of free trade passed; the wording of petition to Parliament discussed. But on 21st January, 1793, news came of Louis's execution; the flags of Liverpool flew half-mast. Glitter of East Indian expansion dimmed.

Pitt had left France to manage her own affairs—her own and no others. But now the French leaders showed desire to proselytise, to spread their principles by force where persuasion failed. In November, 1792, they had declared themselves ready to fraternise with republicans of all nationalities, in December Monge, the French Minister of Marine, avowed his intention of assisting the English republicans, and in February, 1793, England was at war.

The merchants, filled with wrath against the regicides,

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convoked by Pitt to consult with the Government upon the necessary measures for protection of Liverpool's shipping; an embargo laid on ships carrying naval or military supplies; Letters of Marque issued. Liverpool was experienced: by July sixty-seven privateers were armed and manned to sail against their old enemies.

But the independent thinkers, the supporters of the Abolition who foregathered at Green bank and at William Roscoe's house, deplored British policy. The execution of the King and Queen of France they condemned from reasons of humanity, but they considered that England had no right to interfere in the free choice of a people to administer its own country.

A few years previously Wilberforce, in supporting the commercial treaty which Great Britain proposed to make with France, had asked if it were necessary to remain perpetually at feud with France, simply in order to maintain the tradition of the balance of power and the policy of supporting weaker states against stronger. "This principle has made us splendid in the pages of history, but I wish the country could at length learn that important lesson—that the greatness and happiness of a people are not the same."

William Rathbone, Dr. Binns, William Roscoe, Dr. Currie, and their few friends had agreed, still agreed with Wilberforce. They formed a Society of the Friends of Peace, published their resolutions in the Liverpool press; Dr. Currie, under the pseudonym of Jasper Wilson, wrote and published a letter to the Prime Minister condemning his policy. The letter was eagerly bought. It was sold in America; translated into French and German. Soon the term Jacobin and Abolitionist became synonymous in Liverpool. The Friends of Peace became so unpopular that they were attacked and in-

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sulted in the street. Dr. Binns, the father of Jonathan Binns, one night received a summons to attend a patient in the house of one, Robert Benson. The way lay along Salthouse dock, which, after dark, was not willingly negotiated by any of Liverpool's citizens, frequented as it was by drunken seamen, thieves and men of the press-gang. Dr. Binns had become careful; he well knew of the prevalent antagonism, he sought to verify the message and found it to be a false one. There was no doubt in his son's mind that "his distruction was intended."

Since physical violence was added to vituperation, the Friends stopped their meetings, but not their active efforts to compass parliamentary reform. Roscoe drew up a declaration, in answer to the Government exhortation to the public to beware of seditious and treasonable writers, in which he expressed the loyalty of those who signed it, but reaffirmed their determination to work by legal and constitutional means for reform. The Mayor protested; a public meeting called; the Mayor and Roscoe in violent debate. Two hours of argument and Roscoe's declaration was supported on Liverpool's upflung hands. The following week it was to be signed. But the mob awaited the bearers of the address, seized and tore it up, clamoured for the Mayor and the Constitution. In 1795 Roscoe and the Peace Party tried again. Fifty merchant supporters outvoted by 200. But Liverpool was not ready for peace. Her trade was handicapped but not ruined. Liverpool privateers were bringing in rich prizes. There was a guardship in the Mersey, the garrison and the Volunteers for her protection; and the previous year the principal French West Indian colonies had been taken. More trade for the Royal African Company, more slaves, more sugar. The Mayor, whose brother, Lieutenant-Colonel Blundell, had distinguished himself in the

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capture of Martinique, enjoyed vicarious celebrity, invited all Liverpool society and authority to a banquet. In May the church bells rang for the capture of Guadaloupe, in June for Lord Howe and the victory off Ushant. Liverpool fluttering with bunting, flapping with flags, handkerchiefs, curtains; clanging with bell-peals, booming with gun salutes, and the flags barely hauled down, the curtains re-hung, before the bells were again swinging up and over for the capture of Port au Prince in Santo Domingo.

Let the London mob break Mr. Pitt's windows, hoot at His Majesty King George, riot for food and peace. But it was something more than self-interest which animated Liverpool. There was, in the citizens once roused, a dogged pugnacity, a fighting strain, which, allied to Lancashire shrewdness, made them redoubtable foes.

In the first year of the war, although Liverpool lost many Guineamen to the French, Liverpool captains captured many French slave ships and over 1,500 slaves, which they successfully sold in the West Indies. To give spur to the crews of Letters of Marque came Captain Hutchinson, the Pilgrim, with the richest prize yet taken: *La Liberté*, free no longer. Sugar, mother o' pearl, coral, cinnamon, pepper, Indian cottons and tea, piled in Liverpool's warehouses and £190,000 in Liverpool pockets. Such a capture was worthy of perpetuation. Mr. Barton, with his share of the prize money, bought an estate at Everton—called it Pilgrim.

The slave ships sailed with trade goods and hope of prizes. They were frequently attacked but they were well armed and although in the West Indies the price of slaves was high, the planters were not short-handed.

In 1796 the Dutch had formed a republic at France's instigation; Spain had declared war on England, and the

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Earle brothers' ship, the *Harlequin*, Captain Topping, sailed down the Mersey to buy slaves on the Guinea Coast. That evening a French privateer bore down on the *Harlequin*, bow-chasers raining shot into her, whereupon Captain Topping returned fire with his stern-chasers. The Frenchman shortened sail and in the darkness the *Harlequin* altered her course, sought to shake off her pursuer. But at dawn the watch saw the narrow black brig, pierced for sixteen guns, making sail to run alongside. For thirteen hours they fought. The *Harlequin*, canvas piled on, made the best of her way, followed by the enemy. The Lancashire men fought till every shot was gone, every ounce of nails and copper dross finished, then the *Harlequin* struck to her assailant. The brig was *L'Aventure*, Captain Latorine. Captain Topping and his men were kept aboard her for nine days and then put aboard a Swedish vessel which landed them at Figueira. But the *Harlequin's* chequered history was only begun. She was recaptured by the London ship *Sugar Cane*, traded on the Windward Coast under Captain Higgin; recaptured a Swedish ship from the French and a Spanish brig privateer under Captain Topping in 1797, and the following year successfully made Angola after a running fight with a French privateer of fourteen guns. In December of that year she again set sail for Africa and was taken by the large French privateer *La Mouche*. Finally she was sent to England by the French with eighty-nine British seamen and an English captain, in exchange for the same number of Frenchmen.

There is record of many Liverpool ships being captured and subsequently retaken, but the career of the *Harlequin* was exceptional.

Meanwhile Sir John Jervis with fifteen sail of the line to the French and Spanish twenty-five, fought and won

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the engagement off Cape St. Vincent and Admiral Duncan beat the Dutch fleet off Camperdown. But in the Navy, despite success, discontent, distilled to inflammable essence, needed but a spark to set it aflame. The seamen who fought with the greatest courage and determination in engagement, were, nevertheless, rarely sailors by choice. They were trapped, enticed, bullied, forced at the pistol point into His Majesty's Navy. No body of men in all England was held in greater odium than the pressgang. In Liverpool they had quarters in various parts of the town, flag-topped to notify volunteers. The munificent bounty offered by the Corporation of every port attracted some impecunious civilians, but their number was far below the war-needs of the Navy. The pressgang, ruthless, armed, led by a shabby-coated officer, raked the streets, the cobbled alleys. The women cursed and emptied slops over them, the children—too often threatened by "the pressgang" for misdemeanour—fled howling before them. They invaded tap-rooms and brothels; held up stage coaches, lurked at village fairs far inland. The liberty of every able-bodied man was in constant jeopardy. But, if it were possible, the Navy preferred experienced seamen, so that the docks were the pressgang's elected hunting ground. On a September evening in 1793 Felix M'Iroy, Master of the sloop *Ann*, was stopped by the press gang in Redcross Street. He fought with feet and fists so successfully that one of the enraged gang drew a pistol and shot him dead. The pressgang returned to their tender, lying in the river. At the inquest on M'Iroy the coroner brought in a verdict of murder. There were many witnesses who rejoiced at the opportunity to give evidence against the murderer and he was brought to trial at Lancaster assizes. He was given a month's imprisonment. The Liverpool seamen, en-

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raged by injustice added to brutality, gutted the press-gang's quarters in Strand Street and on the New Quay. They flung broken furniture, crockery, bedding into the streets, battered in doors and windows, wrenched the pannelling and wainscotting from the walls and were only dispersed when they had left nothing but the four walls standing.

The men of England fought against impressment, did everything in their power to avoid and hinder the press gang, but once they had become seamen they achieved a unity, a solidarity of purpose which they used with equal violence against the enemy and the abusers of their rights as a body. In 1797 the sailors of the fleet at Spithead, led by the crew of the flag-ship *Queen Charlotte*, mutinied. They revolted against under-payment, short rations, insufficient medical attention. The King sent Lord Howe to deal with the mutineers' petitions. Concessions were made, the seamen conciliated. But there were those whom only radical reform could content. The concessions of the Government, they maintained, had merely palliated their lot. The mutineers at the Nore were organised and armed, had already taken possession of twenty-four ships. They seized store-ships, blockaded the Thames, fired on the loyal frigates. But they were prevented from landing to fetch water and provisions, Pitt brought in a bill which made intercourse with the rebels a felony. The mutiny gradually lost impetus and Richard Parker, the ring-leader, was eventually delivered by the crew of the *Sandwich*, his self-styled flag ship, and hanged at the yard-arm. Nevertheless though the mutiny of the seamen obtained redress for many grievances, it was yet another proof of the growing consciousness of social abuses, of oppression and of privileges withheld. Wider knowledge of France and America and the trend of their govern-



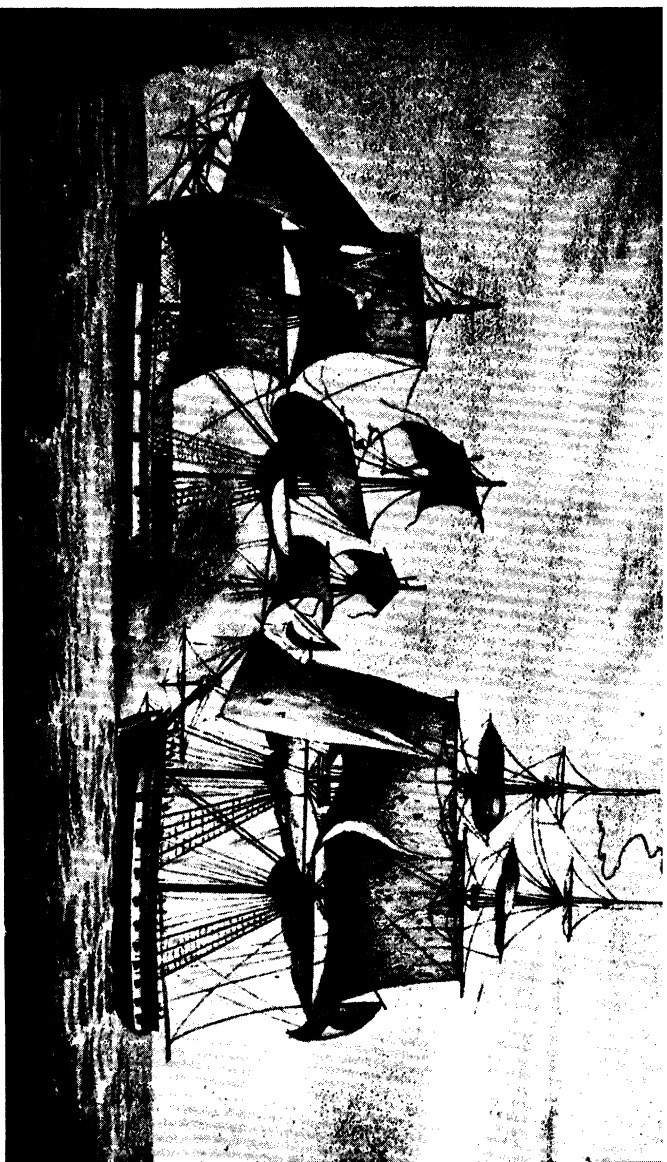
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ments' policy, the coagulate whereby the amorphous discontents of the British working classes and peasants took form and shape before them. They saw personal liberty as their unalienable right and for the first time began to analyse its infringement.

Wilkes, Tom Paine, Granville Sharp, struck steel against flint, kindled, illuminated a section of public opinion hitherto inarticulate, forced uncomfortable reconsideration upon ignorant, biased upper classes. And every fresh demonstration and revolt indirectly helped the cause of the Abolitionists.

Rebellion in Ireland; protests against Pitt's heavy taxation; Buonaparte occupying Malta, Cairo; England uneasy and depressed. Then the Battle of the Nile; Nelson restoring confidence—Baron Nelson of the Nile and Burnham Thorpe in Norfolk—and while the First Consul harried Europe the Guineamen steered erratic watchful courses for the African Coast, their horizons unchanged save for the occasional up-thrust of a French mast. Buonaparte in Italy; Suwarov in Switzerland; the British and Russian retreat from Holland; Captain Crow at Bonny was far more preoccupied by news of three French frigates lying at the river mouth. He was, thanks to his friendliness with Kings Pepple and Holiday, well-slaved, the Will, loose fore-topsail and ensign hoisted, ready for the Middle Passage. There were nine ships slaving at Bonny; despite competitive sales in the West Indies, the risk of health of seamen and slaves, it was politic to wait for them. The nine Guineamen sailed down the river led by the Lottery, Captain Latham, routed the French and drove on towards West Indian ports.

Captain Crow prided himself on his slaves. He had a reputation for fat and healthy negroes. Vanity and kindli-



THE WILL OF LIVERPOOL

Captain Crow beating off a French Privateer, 21st February, 1800

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ness mingled, he kept his ships clean and healthy, sternly suppressed cruelty and abuse, and insisted on daily mouth-washing, teeth-cleaning and ablutions for the slaves. He fed them well on "messes" of yams, dried fish, "shilled" beans, biscuit, coconut and palm oil, and tempted the sick negroes with "strong soups and middle messes" made with mutton, chicken or goats' flesh, thickened with sago, "the whole mixed with port-wine and sugar." The negro invalids had strong stomachs since it was a diet which Captain Crow appears to have found most efficacious. Certainly he rarely lost any of his slaves in the Middle Passage.

The Will was off Tobago when a French privateer of eighteen guns bore down upon her, gave her two broadsides, manoeuvring to come alongside. But the guns of the Will returned the fire and the Frenchman sheered off. For two hours the two ships fought, then the Frenchman came within hail, demanded Crow's surrender.

"Sooner than strike to such as you," bawled Crow, "I'd go down with my ship." Whereupon the French captain seized a musket and fired at him and the yelling crew tried to board the Will. Crow gave them three broadsides and after another two hours' fighting the Frenchman sheered off. Canvas tattered; rigging festooned; a gaping hole in the deck, twelve slaves wounded by the shot, and Captain Crow in his cabin returning thanks "to that Providence which had always been so indulgent" to him. "When the blackwomen heard that I was below," he wrote, "numbers of the poor creatures gathered round me, and saluting me in their rude but sincere manner, thanked their gods . . . that we had overcome the enemy."

But His Majesty's Navy were not so grateful as Crow's slaves. At Kingston, on the Will's arrival, eight men-of-

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war boats came alongside and impressed every seaman they could find on board. Nevertheless Captain Crow reached the Mersey safely, appeared in Liverpool complacent with £100 bounty, a piece of plate from the merchants and underwriters "for his meritorious conduct in the River Bonny . . . when menaced by three French Frigates," and Mr. Aspinall's personal thanks.

Crow's next slaving voyage in the autumn was safely accomplished. Neither slave nor man was lost. But in 1801, when he was captain of the *Mary* bound for Bonny, he had all his best seamen impressed. As he drove down the channel, between the "Old Head of Kinsale and England", the frigate *Amethyst* signalled him. Crow reluctantly took in his small sails, the *Amethyst* came up and a party came on board. The impressed men possessed "protections" and Crow had paid them a three months' advance of £6 each, but in spite of his protests the men were taken.

"The impressment of these men by a frigate which I have since ascertained was full of men, was nothing less than a robbery of our merchants on the high seas by parties from whom we had a right to look for protection," he wrote. "This was not, however, the only instance in which the merchant service, from which the riches of the State and her best defence are derived, was wantonly crippled and distressed, and that our merchants tamely suffered themselves to be so much oppressed is only to be accounted for on the supposition that no general effort was resorted to, to counteract the grievance."

Crow sent a message by brig from Jamaica to Mr. Aspinall, who instituted an action to recover the impressed seamen's wages. He made a mistake, however, in the name of the frigate's commander and was "non-suited and left without any means of redress."

## LESSONS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Thereafter Crow made uneventful voyages to Guinea, until the year 1806. He was, however, constantly on the alert and prepared for attack, for the enemy privateers increased their efforts to blockade the British West Indies. The Liverpool citizens were kept well informed, and in December they read an impressive list of the names and armaments of the three large enemy brigs and seven schooners which were cruising to windward of Barbados and among the islands. The privateers, pointed out the newspaper, discouragingly, were manned with from seventy to 100 men each "and sail very fast, and we have but few men-of-war to cruise against them." During the Middle Passage Crow trained his slaves to shoot; made elaborate hand-grenades from two-gallon glass jars filled with layers of gunpowder, flints and pepper, with a fuse run through the sealed cork and a canvas cover coated with brandy, brimstone and powder. These missiles were to be hauled to one of the tops, fired by the armourer and hurled on to the enemy's decks. "The contrivance," wrote the kindly Crow, "was, I confess, destructive, if not wicked;" he was determined, however, at the cost of his humane feelings, to avoid capture, since he had not forgotten the rigours of the imprisonment which he had undergone six years previously.

He had been chief mate of the *Gregson*, Captain Gibson, bound for Cape Coast. The French ship *Robuste* had attacked the *Gregson* and after a two hours' fight Captain Gibson struck and the officers and crew were taken prisoner. For some weeks they were well-treated, but, removed to a prison at Quimper in Brittany, Crow and his fellow prisoners would have starved had not he had a little money, and had not Lady Fitzroy and the Honourable Henry Wellesley (sister and brother of the Duke of Wellington), who were also prisoners, sent

food to them. The prisoners thought bitterly of the efforts being made in England on behalf of the negroes. "Often," wrote Crow, "did we wish that our colour had been black, or anything else than white, so that we might have attracted the notice and commanded the sympathy of Fox, Wilberforce, and others of our patriotic statesmen."

Within five months two thousand prisoners were dead and the rest were marched weary days across France to Pontoise. There Crow was sent to hospital, footsore, feverish and exhausted. He was ill for many weeks, but with regaining strength grew confidence and determination to escape. But it was not until May of the following year that he reviewed his stored French words; took them out, handled them, and decided that he was equipped to make his way across France. A few dozen French words; a large tricoloured cockade against all France and her soldiery! But he was strong now and determined. Fifty miles on his way West, he was stopped at a bridge-head by an officer and his men. The officer questioning him; his mouth dry; his French? Wildly he fumbled for words. There was nothing there; they had evaporated. He stood mute. Suddenly memory of the Quimper prison spurred him. He must say something. Anything but English. Desperately he began to pour forth words of every foreign language that he had culled in his voyagings. "Mingling the whole with my native language, the Manks, with a copiousness proportioned to my facility in speaking it." The Frenchman was angry and astonished, Gallic fluency outvied. Crow, confidence regained, found adequate retort to all the officer's threats by loud and repeated protestations—in broken Spanish—that he could not understand. Finally the Frenchman swore that such pigheaded stupidity could only emanate from Brittany. "He swore that I was a Breton," recounted Crow, "and

giving me a sharp slap with his sword, he exclaimed, 'Va t'en, coquin!'"

Crow left the Frenchmen in a cloud of Manx protestations of gratitude. Henceforward he travelled only by night. He fled from the vicinity of a French camp, upon which he came unexpectedly; and exhausted by sixty miles walking knocked at a cottage door. He was cared for by the kindly peasant family, fell unconscious across the wooden tub in which he was soaking his bruised, blistered feet; and three days later reached Le Havre, where a Danish captain gave him a passage to Deal.

It was little wonder that Crow would rather go down with his ship than return as a prisoner to France. Well prepared, he was determined to fight all and any Frenchman with whom he met.

In this belligerent spirit Crow was running down in the latitude of Tobago with studding sails set. His ship, the *Mary*, of five hundred tons, carried twenty-four long nine-pounders on the main deck, and four eighteen-pound carronades on the quarter deck. Crow scanned the horizon through his glass. Empty . . . empty . . . two sail! They were powerful men-of-war. Wiser to give them a wide berth. But the vessels tacked, came after the *Mary* under heavy press of canvas. Crow, a match for any single ship, had no wish to fight two. But he would not be captured. He called all hands to quarter. He would defend the ship, go down with her sooner than strike. The crew cheered. "Commend yourselves, my brave fellows, to the care of Providence." The captain's heroics cut short, in the dusk close astern towering bows, and someone hailing—in English. The old trick! British flags, English speech. "No strange ship shall bring me to in these seas in the night," he retorted, and the fight began.



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Balls flying in the darkness; flashing of cannonades and guns; the armourer aloft surrounded by his sticky dangling bombs. Crow grazed by a splinter; the boat-swain crippled; the slaves shrieking below, wounded by cannon balls. All through the night they fought. In yellow-grey morning light Crow fell, lost consciousness. He was not gravely wounded, but when he recovered his senses he found that the crew had struck to their opponents.

Ill and disheartened he was carried to his cabin, the officers and crew, powder-blackened, blood-stained, weary, prepared to surrender. The Mary had lost main mast and bowsprit; three of her guns were out of action, her sails and rigging shredded, and the lower fore-studding sail burnt to tinder. The ship's boats came alongside; the conquerors reached the top of the gangway; they were Englishmen. The ships Crow had fought with such determination were British men-of-war—the Dart and the Wolverine.

What had he done? He, Hugh Crow, Liverpool's renowned captain, had made a fool of himself. He beat his head against the panelling until his nose bled, wept tears of anger and mortification. Crowded and confused rose images of his action's outcome. But the naval officers consoled him. He had put up a fine fight; he and his crew were stout antagonists. Crow's despair fading, finally banished when Captain Spear of H.M.S. Dart gave him a certificate extolling his gallantry, exonerating him from blame. Restored in self-esteem, Captain Crow sailed on to Jamaica, sold his slaves to the great advantage of Mr. Aspinall, and received the visits and commiseration of a number of negroes whom he had sold on former voyages. "Long live Massa," cried they, "for him da fight ebery voyage."

## LESSONS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The British West Indies had been kept in alarm since the outbreak of war. In September, 1793, a British force invaded Santo Domingo. At first they were partially successful against the French, but disease ravaged the troops, and Toussaint L'Ouverture made Commander-in-Chief of the French army, rallied mulattoes and negroes against them.

"The accounts from the French West Indies are very discouraging," wrote William Rathbone to a friend in February, 1795, "and whatever force we may send there, it is very doubtful that we shall be able ever to subdue the negroes and mulattoes. The cruelties practised by our Troops there are too shocking to relate. I have lately seen an American who is just come from St. Domingo, and he was an eye-witness to deeds so ferocious as to equal anything I have ever read or heard of."

In that year Toussaint L'Ouverture drove the British out of the island. By 1801 he was master of the whole island, adopted a constitutional form of government and nominated himself president for life. But with increasing power Napoleon was not disposed to tolerate a republic within his possessions. Determined to reduce Santo Domingo to a colony and reintroduce abolished slavery, he sent his brother-in-law, Le Clerc, with 25,000 troops to re-establish his authority. The negroes resisted in the mountains, L'Ouverture summoned to a parley, was treacherously betrayed and taken to France, but, when the Peace of Amiens was signed in March, 1802, the remnants of his followers rallied under Dessalines, were still resisting the French troops, coming down from the hills to harry them and killing any civilian they suspected of supporting the French.

By the short-lived treaty England agreed to cede all colonies she had captured from the French, Spanish and

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Dutch, except Trinidad. In the British West Indies there appears to have been little antagonism towards the former enemy. In August the French commodore dined at Government Pen (House) and on board H.M.S. Vanguard, and in September, 1802, one of General Le Clerc's aides-de-camp arrived in Jamaica with despatches for the Governor. He told General Nugent that within a few months 14,000 men of the French army had died of yellow fever, and that he was one of the two remaining aides-de-camp of the ten brought out by Le Clerc. When he returned to Santo Domingo he bore a present of English cut-glass from the Governor's wife to Madame Le Clerc and a hobby-horse for her son Astyanax.

But the following year England and France were again at war and the British Fleet lay off Santo Domingo. In November 3,000 French troops surrendered to a British squadron. Once more French privateers and men-of-war cruised up and down among the islands.

Napoleon, Emperor; Napoleon iron-crowned King of Italy; Napoleon victor of Austerlitz; Napoleon massing his forces at Boulogne to invade England. In Spanish Town on 8th March an express arrived from General Myers: several French men-of-war carrying troops had appeared to windward. They had attacked Dominica but their success there, and future destination, were unknown. The island prepared to defend itself. The vicissitudes of Mr. Wilberforce's Bill for the abolition of the slave trade forgotten in anxiety and speculation. The Governor writing orders, interviewing his staff the night through; the estate owners near the coast preparing to send their womenfolk, their children inland. Days of rumours, reports and suspense. On 30th a ship brought news that the French fleet had been seen off Santo Domingo, setting a course for Jamaica. The following

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morning the Governor declared martial law, left before daylight for Kingston and a Council of War. The negroes grew obstreperous in the street, the militia dispersed them. A coloured sergeant of the militia abused his colonel, vilified the white race, and exhorted his company to revolt; and the Governor's wife on her evening walk commented fearfully on the conduct of one of the negro boatmen who passed her without a bow. "He was . . . very humble, but to-night he only grinned and gave us a sort of fierce look," she wrote that night in her journal. The domestic slaves were more excited than alarmed, although they professed a satisfactory hatred of the French. The island waited behind barrack walls and fortresses, locked doors and packed trunks of valuables. On 5th April Admiral Dacres sent a despatch: the French Fleet had shaped its course towards the Mona Passage, and could not, therefore, be contemplating any immediate attack upon the island. Tension relaxed; boxes were unpacked; the slaves once more polite and amenable.

Since the beginning of the previous winter, Nelson, in command of the Mediterranean Fleet, had been watching the harbour of Toulon. The French Fleet was preparing to embark a large body of troops. Where were they going? To draw out the Frenchmen, he sailed for Barcelona; behind him Admiral Villeneuve put to sea with ten sail of the line, and, reinforced at Cadiz by six Spanish and two more French ships, sailed for the West Indies with Nelson following him.

On 7th April news reached Spanish Town from General Myers, that an English squadron was approaching to windward. There was every prospect of the enemy being routed. Spanish Town regained confidence; the great flag in the Square flew more boldly, the red-coated

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gentlemen of the militia, each with a negro boy to carry his musket, strode more purposefully, and the Assembly graciously approving the Governor's measures for the island's safety. May passed and in Jamaica it was only known that enemy ships were still in West Indian waters; then in June came an express from England and the Windward Islands. The French force was detained in Martinique by fever; Jamaica might soon expect reinforcements.

Meanwhile Nelson had reached Barbadoes without sighting the French Fleet; on a false report he sailed on to Trinidad, and thence to Martinique. In Spanish Town the Governor anxiously awaited news. The reports were unreliable and contradictory: the French had left Martinique bound for Europe; the French Fleet was seen sailing towards Santo Domingo. But Villeneuve eventually reached Cadiz, and Nelson a sick and disappointed man returned to Spithead, struck his flag and retired to Merton. It was many weeks before Jamaica heard of these events, but shortly afterwards came the great news of Villeneuve's defeat by Nelson at Trafalgar.

Sir Eyre Coote arrived in Jamaica early in 1806 to succeed General Nugent as Lieutenant-Governor. His arrival caused consternation and indignation, for he brought with him news that the slave trade was to be abolished.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

**W**ILBERFORCE had not allowed the war to interfere with his determination to abolish the slave trade. Year after year he brought forward his motion undeterred by opposition and procrastination. His ante-room was always crowded with his supporters. Hannah More described it as "a Noah's Ark, full of beasts clean and unclean." The waiting-room was sparsely furnished, provided with books of large and ponderous dimensions, since from sad experience Wilberforce had discovered that small volumes found their way into the pockets of petitioners and were not seen again.

In 1794 an amendment that the slave trade should be continued until 1796 was carried in the House of Commons by a majority of nineteen. It was a decision, said Fox, which had been taken to "sate the unbounded cravings of British avarice."

The slave traders realised that the limitation of the trade, if not its immediate abolition, was imminent and sought to make the most of the opportunities remaining to them. Among many petitions came one from Mr. Dawson, a Liverpool merchant, who represented that his entire fortune, amounting to £509,000, was invested in eighteen slave ships "for the service of Spain." In 1796 the Liverpool merchants petitioned jointly against the Abolition. "Prosperity to the African Trade, and

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may it always be conducted with Humanity." Mr. John Tarleton's friends drank the toast on the King's birthday.

The following year Mr. C. R. Ellis, member of a West Indian family of standing, proposed that the Colonial Governors be instructed to urge upon councils and assemblies such better treatment of the slaves as to render them more prolific. This, he maintained, would abolish the necessity for the trade in slaves. The motion was carried by ninety-seven to sixty-three votes. But Wilberforce was not content. The next year he again brought in his motion for the Abolition. It was defeated by four votes, and the Liverpool Town Council presented Mr. Peter Brancker, the Parliamentary delegate, with a piece of plate valued at one hundred guineas for being "very instrumental in securing a continuance of the Slave Trade under proper restrictions and regulations."

The *Annual Register* in 1799 stated: "On 1st March Mr. Wilberforce made his annual motion for the abolition of the Slave Trade." Opposition was stronger, the news from Santo Domingo caused unease. The motion was lost by thirty votes. Liverpool had again petitioned against any further legislation. The health and comfort of the slaves, they maintained, had already been effectually secured. In October the Recorder of Liverpool and a committee of the Council took coach for London bearing with them the freedom of the borough in a gold casket and an illuminated address for His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence "in grateful sense of his active and able exertions in Parliament" on behalf of the slave trade.

Two hundred and twenty-six pounds to enclose, twenty-five guineas to embellish gratitude. The merchants felt that they could hardly acknowledge royal patronage less worthily.

The maiden speech of William, Duke of Clarence,

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had been made against the abolition of slavery. His Royal Highness had been, he said, an attentive observer of the negroes' condition. He had no doubt that he could furnish proofs to convince their Lordships that the slaves' state, far from being a miserable one was, comparatively considered, a state of humble happiness.

Bristol, her Guinea trade waned, through competition rather than conscience, was sanctimoniously censorious. "The ardour for the trade to Africa for men and women, our fellow creatures and equals," wrote the *New Bristol Guide*, "is much abated among the humane and benevolent merchants of Bristol. In 1787 there were but thirty ships employed in this melancholy traffic, while the people of Liverpool in their indiscriminate rage for commerce and for getting money at all events, have nearly engrossed this trade, incredibly exceeding London and Bristol in it, employ many thousands of tons of shipping for the purpose of buying and enslaving God's rational creatures and are the vendors (*horresco referens*) of the souls and bodies of men and women!"

In 1800 Wilberforce consented to a compromise with the representatives of the West Indian party. They would agree to the suspension of the slave trade for five years if he, in his turn, would agree to withhold his accustomed motion. But Wilberforce's supporters organised a public meeting, and the compromise was vigorously condemned.

In her diary Lady Nugent wrote, on 8th April, 1802, that she had amused herself by reading the evidence submitted to the House of Commons by the petitioners for the Abolition. From her own experience in Jamaica she considered the accounts of the slaves' ill-treatment to be greatly exaggerated. There were, of course, individual cases of abuse, but she had visited many estates and talked with countless Creoles, both white and mulatto, and



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many slaves. "It appears to me," she reflected, "there would be certainly no necessity for the Slave Trade, if religion, decency, and good order, were established among the negroes; if they could be prevailed upon to marry; and if our white men would but set them a better example." She knew of many estates where married negroes had reared large families of children, who eventually served their masters well. It was the fault of the white men that the negresses could not supply the demand for slaves without supplement from Africa. "Married and single live in a state of licentiousness with their female slaves."

Lady Nugent, like many other intelligent and humane men and women, seemed to have considered that the breeding of sufficient slaves for the plantations' upkeep, which would abolish the necessity for further trade in slaves, an adequate and humane solution of the whole problem of slavery. The fact that such local increase would merely swing the balance of profit from trader to planter did not appear to have occurred to her.

The planters' promiscuity was sometimes turned against them. One member of the Jamaica Assembly, anxious to keep his estate well stocked, advised one of his slaves to marry.

"Hi, Massa, you telly me marry one wife, which is no good," retorted the negro. "You no tinky I see you buckra no content wid one, two, tree, four wives; no more poor negro."

But the merchants who traded to Africa were unconcerned by the possibility that the negroes in the British West Indies, by additional spiritual and physical care, might become sufficiently prolific to supply the estates' needs. England had captured the French and Dutch West Indian colonies, the demand for slaves was increas-

ing. In the year 1802 Liverpool ships had carried 31,371 out of a total of 41,086 slaves from Africa to the West Indies. The following year thirty-three Liverpool ships sold 29,954 and in 1804 126 carried 31,090 slaves to the West Indies. The profits were enormous, and, when Wilberforce repeated his motion, pleading that already eight years had passed since the date set for the Abolition and nothing had been done, Tarleton vigorously opposed it. But at last the motion was carried by forty-nine votes. Wilberforce and his supporters were elated. Victory in sight. The Bill passed to the Lords. It was too late in the Session however, and, against Pitt's advice, Wilberforce, spurred by success, introduced it the following Session. The Bill was defeated in the House of Commons on its second reading by seven votes.

When Wilberforce had carried his motion the previous year, the Irish Members, led by Lord de Blaquièrre, after "a great Irish dinner" at which they toasted him, had voted for him, bluffly declaring that although they had never considered the question before, they had had no difficulty in coming to a unanimous decision upon it. But this time the Irishmen were mostly absent. Of the nine present, but one voted for the Bill. They had not been stimulated by Lord de Blaquièrre's enthusiasm or a "great Irish dinner."

Wilberforce was deeply depressed. "I have had a damp struck into my heart", he wrote to Muncaster. "I could not sleep either on Thursday or Friday night without dreaming of scenes of depredation and cruelty on the injured shores of Africa." But his spirit was not broken. "If we cannot stop the whole of this accursed traffic, it is much to stop half of it," he continued, "and I am resolved to do what I can, I repeat it."

On 23rd January, 1806, Pitt died. His had been a

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great and powerful ministry. Until the French Revolution he had known little but popularity and success. He died while England still fought Napoleon, he was a great and brilliant Parliamentary leader, a great peace-minister, but before he died he had to face problems and difficulties which he was ill-equipped to encounter. Great as he was, Pitt was inclined to sacrifice great causes with which he was in sympathy—and with his talents and personality might have carried—rather than risk his ascendancy when serious opposition arose. He had encouraged Wilberforce in early championship of the abolition of the slave trade, had supported him magnificently. Gradually, however, with the greater preoccupations of European peace and war policy, the Union with Ireland and the Catholic claims, Pitt had given less and less active support to the cause. In 1804 he had told Wilberforce that he had no doubt of stopping the slave trade with foreign countries by Royal Proclamation, and Wilberforce had in consequence dropped his plan of moving a resolution to that effect, but he had waited in vain for the Government to act.

"Let me beg you, my dear Pitt," wrote Wilberforce, impatient of delay, "to have the Proclamation issued. . . . It will cost you half an hour to settle this."

But Pitt procrastinated, and it was not until many months had passed, that an Order in Council was framed. "So framed as to be worse than none," Wilberforce complained. The order was issued in September. The Abolitionists had been greatly disappointed in Pitt, but, nevertheless, Wilberforce remained his personal friend until his death and himself offered £1,000 towards paying the debts Pitt had left behind him. The new Coalition Ministry, under Fox and Grenville, gave new life to the endeavour and fresh heartening to Wilberforce.

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Fox and Grenville summoned Wilberforce. Together they discussed, consulted. Finally they decided that a resolution for total abolition should be proposed in both Houses. Fox was to move the resolution in the Commons, Grenville in the Lords.

On 10th June Fox brought forward his motion. He rose before the House, already a sick man.

"So fully am I impressed," he began, "with the vast importance and necessity of attaining what will be the object of my motion this day that, if, during the almost forty years that I have now had the honour of a seat in Parliament, I had been so fortunate as to accomplish that, and that only, I should think I had done enough. . ."

Canning and Romilly, the new Solicitor-General, were among those who supported him. Tarleton fought stubbornly, but the motion was carried by ninety-nine votes. A fortnight later Grenville moved the resolution in the House of Lords. It was carried by forty-one votes to thirty.

The Abolitionists rightly surmised that the passing of the resolution would lead to a last hasty widespread speculation in the Guinea trade. In seven weeks the Session would be ended. At all costs they must prevent the rush to the African coast, the overcrowding of slave ships, the death of hundreds of slaves. With the sympathy of the Ministry they hastened through both Houses a Bill prohibiting the employment of any ships not hitherto employed in the slave trade.

Fox died in September and Parliament was dissolved. The new Parliament met on 15th December and William Roscoe sat as one of Liverpool's members. It cannot be said that Roscoe's opinions were representative of those of the majority of his constituents. He was the intimate friend of all prominent enemies of the slave trade; he had refuted the Rev. Raymund Harris's publicly rewarded

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defence of the slave trade, been zealous in the cause of negro liberty. Nevertheless, by his frankness, intelligence and integrity he had won Liverpool's respect, and two days before the election he was asked to stand for the Whigs against General Gascoyne and General Sir Banastre Tarleton. Liverpool settled down to enjoy the fight, fluttered with squibs and broadsheets, fought with tongues in Castle Street and Rodney Street, with fists along the docks, and rioted with zest.

"You will shortly be called, brother freeman, to action,  
And I write but to guard you against the old faction.  
Whom four years ago we left quite in the dumps.  
They are Jacobins all, and we call them the *rumps*.  
Let us wait on Will Roscoe and strike the first blow,  
Sirs,  
He's a chap that will suit both the Corn Jews and  
grocers,"

carolled the Tory supporters.

But they had little meat with which to season their songs. William Roscoe was unimpeachably respectable. The gallant Sir Banastre, however, provided excellent butt for his less euphemistic opponents. Forthright references were made to his private life, to his connection with the notorious Perdita Robinson, who had been mistress of the Prince of Wales and Charles James Fox before she had conferred her favours upon Sir Banastre.

Roscoe's opponents, in their addresses, did little to specify their political aims. They were ponderously pontifical upon the "responsibilities," the "serious duties" of a Member of Parliament, expatiated at length upon their sincere desire to fulfil all the expectations of their supporters. Roscoe, however, boldly declared his aims to be peace, parliamentary reform and the abolition of the slave trade.

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It cannot be doubted that had Liverpool's other candidates been men of greater ability, both, as supporters of the slave trade, would have been elected forthwith. But Liverpool was obliged to sacrifice championship of the slave trade to competent and honest representation in Parliament. William Roscoe headed the poll with 1,151 votes, while General Gascoyne defeated Sir Banastre Tarleton. Roscoe rejoiced that at last he could show his allegiance to Wilberforce in the House of Commons. His first speech would be a passionate declaration of his anti-slavery principles. He sought William Rathbone, who enthusiastically wrote his whole speech for him, but when Roscoe finally stood up in the House, his speech, outcome of conviction, was in his own words.

Despite the election of William Roscoe, Liverpool still fought for her Guinea trade. In January, 1807, the Corporation and Dock Trustees petitioned the House of Lords that the Abolition Bill be not passed, and should it, "from considerations foreign to their interests" become law, they prayed for compensation for the depreciated value of their warehouses and property. And substantial compensation it should be; 49,213 slaves sold in sixteen months: £62,831 in dues.

On 2nd January, 1807, Fox's proposed "Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade" was read for the first time in the House of Lords. The first clause enacted that after 1st May the African slave trade and "all manner of dealing and trading" in slaves in Africa or their transport therefrom to "any island, country, territory or place whatever, is hereby utterly abolished, prohibited, and declared to be unlawful." For contravention of the law a fine of £100 was to be imposed, for each slave bought, transported or sold.

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The further clauses enacted that any British ship thereafter employed in the slave trade should be forfeited to the Crown; that insurance policies for the safeguarding of the trade should be penalized; and that bounty should be paid for all slaves captured from British ships, or enemy ships in wartime. The Bill proposed that the slaves thus liberated should be "placed at the disposal of the Crown" for service in the Navy or Army or for a regulated apprenticeship to private persons.

The Bill came up for its second reading, but not before the Duke of Clarence, Lord Hawkesbury and Lord Westmorland had revived the tactics which had brought Dundas's proposed Bill for gradual abolition to failure in 1792. Grenville, secure that he had the House behind him, accepted petitions, produced the papers demanded, but their request that further evidence should be called was refused.

On 5th February Grenville opened the debate. In a magnificent speech—"One of the most statesmanlike I ever heard" said Wilberforce afterwards—he pleaded for justice to the African negroes and security for the West Indies. He paid tribute to Wilberforce, to whom the country, he maintained, was deeply indebted for having originally proposed the measure, and for having followed up that proposition by "every exertion from which a chance could be derived of success." Lord Westmorland then rose. He was in a fighting mood. British property and trade would suffer heavily if the slave trade were abolished; abolition would merely accrue to the benefit of the foreign traders. Though he should see the Presbyterian and the prelate, the Methodist and the field preacher, the Jacobin and the murderer unite in support of it, he would raise his voice against it.

Wilberforce subsequently told Muncaster that it was

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to him, "a double pleasure to be praised by Lord Grenville and abused by Lord Westmorland."

Liverpool citizens had no cause to regret the golden casket, the illuminated address, for His Royal Highness the Duke of Clarence fulfilled their most sanguine expectations, albeit without grace or fluency.

It was a repetition of all the old arguments. The challenge flung, caught and thrown back from Bench to Bench. But the Bill was carried by 100 votes. Wilberforce, peering and round-shouldered, listened to the debates with rising confidence. He was treated now with a new deference. "Several peers now speak with quite new civility," he recorded naively. But he guarded against over-confidence. He had been too often disappointed.

On 10th February the third reading was carried in the Lords and the Bill was read for the first time in the Commons.

The fortnight between the first and second readings was one of almost intolerable suspense for Wilberforce. The evidence of the debates led him to anticipate victory, fear of another bitter disappointment led him to force down his soaring hopes. On 23rd February he dined with friends, ate and drank little. It was to be a great night. He hurried to the House. The benches unusually crowded; a tense expectancy, or did he himself imagine it?

But he was not wrong; the body of opinion had swung round and the majority had grown. It is ever easier and more pleasant to join the majority. The enthusiastic members on their feet, to catch the Speaker's eye, the benches a giant bezique marker registering his score. General Gascoigne tenaciously upheld Liverpool's interest, whereupon William Roscoe declared that although Liverpool was his home he had condemned the slave trade ceaselessly for thirty years.



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But it was Romilly's speech which brought the whole House to its feet with a roar. With one stroke he widened the orbit, ringing with his words the symbol of all England's fears and preoccupations, deftly merging patriotic condemnation with party praise. When he looked, he said, to the man at the head of the French monarchy, surrounded with all the pomp of power, the pride of victory, distributing kingdoms to his family and principalities to his followers, seeming to have reached the summit of human ambition and the pinnacle of earthly happiness; and when he followed him to his bed and considered "the pangs with which his solitude must be tortured, by the recollection of the blood he has spilled and the oppressions he has committed;" when he compared that remorse (and he seemed in no doubt that Napoleon was suitably tortured by his past misdeeds) with the feelings with which his honourable friend would leave the House, "after the vote of this night shall have confirmed the object of his humane and unceasing labours", he realised to the full the "pure and perfect felicity" he would enjoy in the consciousness of having saved millions of his fellow creatures.

The roof, the walls, caught and held the cheers, the noisy applause. Wilberforce's face was wet with tears.

The second reading was carried by 267 votes.

The members of the Clapham Sect gathered at Henry Thornton's house. Wilberforce was exuberant.

"Well, Henry, what shall we abolish next?" he cried.

On 16th March at the third reading the Bill was carried without dissent.

"Resolved: That the Bill, with the Amendments, do pass. Ordered: That Mr. Wilberforce do carry the Bill to the Lords; and acquaint them, that this House hath agreed to the same, with some Amendments; to which

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Amendments the House doth desire the concurrence of their Lordships."

Nine days later His Majesty King George's assent was given and the Bill became law. "This House, conceiving the African slave trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity and sound policy, will with all practical expediency proceed to take measures for abolishing the said trade in such manner as may be deemed advisable."

Liverpool received the news with horror. The Abolition came as the final blow to trade. Not three months previously the British Government, by an Order in Council, had declared all French ports in a state of blockade, and prohibited all neutrals from trading with the enemy. This order had begun to affect trade with America, and the merchants, foreseeing yet stricter regulations, were despondent. The city was ruined; grass would grow in the streets; the merchants' gardens would be ploughed up; the merchant fleet dwindle to a few paltry fishing smacks. The negroes' heads mocked from the Town Hall frieze; the merchants' wives sighed over their chocolate. Only a few shrewd speculators began to buy land and property in the city. The purveyors of cheap fiery rum found that demand had ceased; there was little sale for cheap trinkets, muskets and cotton cloth. Such trash had only been suitable as barter for slaves in Africa.

But after the first impact of the blow there came a brief revival of the African Company's activities. The Bill for the Abolition took effect in 1808 and in their determination to wring the last penny of profit from Africa the merchants hastened to provision and load every Guinea-man which was cleared, for a last slaving voyage. They cared little for the comfort or safety of their crews. Casks and bales stowed in reeking rat-infested holds; water-

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kegs refilled without scouring or emptying. What matter if a few slaves and seamen died, goods and slaves sold at a profit handsome enough to cover such minor losses.

It seemed as if the slave trade were the only one in which Liverpool could recoup her losses, and the slave trade was all but finished. In November a new Order in Council had declared that no neutral ship should enter a French port until she had passed through the British contraband control. Napoleon retaliated by the Milan Decree, which declared that all neutral merchant vessels which complied with the British Orders in Council would be considered lawful prizes and forthwith seized several American ships lying in French and Italian ports.

The merchants had wholeheartedly approved the Government measures, but soon they saw their trade dwindling. The Americans, resentful of Britain's claims to search their ships, passed retaliatory acts whereby trade between England and America was virtually suspended. A quarter of Liverpool's trade gone and £22,000 in dock dues. Every Guinea ship cleared must be sent to Africa with all speed to collect every slave available. Prices would be high, now that the Abolition was actually passed; the planters were anxious to buy all they could get. That year Liverpool sent seventy-four ships to Africa, thirty-seven less than the previous year.

Captain Crow felt it incumbent upon him, in later years, to disclaim "being a friend to slavery." He condemned a system whereby his fellow creatures should suffer "any species of oppression hardship or injustice," but he considered that the Abolitionists had acted ignorantly and unwisely, taken measures which would do little to suppress slave-dealing in Africa. The possession of slaves, the trade itself, would simply revert to other and "more brutal" countries. And Crow was not altogether

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wrong. The exportation of negroes from Africa was carried on not only by "more brutal" foreigners, but by British subjects trading under foreign flags. So widespread and successful were the activities of the slave smugglers that the legislation of 1807 was further tightened in 1811 by another Act rendering importation of negroes a felony punishable by fourteen years' transportation and in 1824, the slave trade was declared piracy and subject to the death penalty.

Despite Captain Crow's disclaimer, however, his title to celebrity remains not champion of his oppressed "fellow creatures" but Mind your Eye Crow, who commanded the last slave ship that cleared out of the port of Liverpool.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE KITTY'S AMELIA

ONE October day in 1803 the merchant brothers, George and Robert Tod of 32 Red-cross Street, learned with great satisfaction of the fine prize taken by their ship the Kitty, Captain McDonald. The *Saturday's Advertiser* retailed the news:

"On Saturday arrived the Young Amelia, a fine ship from the Isle of France, bound to l'Orient, laden with sugar, indigo, spices, muslins, &c., captured in lat. 42° 10' long. 16° 30', by the Kitty, McDonald, of this port."

*Billings's Advertiser* supplemented it with detailed account of the cargo. Eighty tons of ebony; thirty bags of cocoa; 1,159 bags of pepper . . . the list was long, impressive; ended with: "Five cases contents unknown." Mysterious, delightful phrase.

She was "Young" no longer. She was the Kitty's Amelia emptied of her rich cargo, filled with cheap trade goods and sailing for the Guinea Coast. She acquitted herself well and, commanded by Captain Nuttall, sailed again in December of the year 1804.

She met heavy weather, took six hard months to make Angola. Captain Nuttall slaved with all despatch, filled his ship and set sail for St. Kitts with the brig Prudence,

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which his owners had instructed him to sell with her cargo of slaves there, or at St. Bartholomew's. But the Kitty's Amelia was an unlucky ship. During the Middle Passage the Captain made timely discovery of a plot by the crew to murder him and his officers and seize the ship. But on her arrival at St. Kitts it is recorded that the three ringleaders hurried to board another ship lying there and that Captain Nuttall's appeal to the commander of H.M. schooner Lucie to have them arrested was disregarded. No explanation is given of how the men escaped or whether, indeed, precautions were taken to prevent them from doing so. To judge from the severity with which merchant captains dealt with their insubordinate or mutinous crews, it would appear that they escaped either through negligence or connivance.

"To the Eternal disgrace of the Navey who often incurage things of this kind in the Mercht. service, those, in the room of being Confined, where incuraged to it by the Officers of the Schooner & there Agent, a well-known Infamous Character in St. Kitts, one Doctor Armstrong, to bring this Accusation against the Capt. for the main purpose on their side of confounding & perplexing him & thereby extrol more readily the penalty for A pretended Overplus of Slaves said to be brought by his Orders in the brig Prudence. This his an Affair of more Serious Consequence to the Underwriters than perhaps they are Aware of, as had Nuttall not Acted as he did they would most Certainly have had to be Answerable to you for the Ship & Cargo, & instances are not wanting to shew where they have paid Severely for Similar Acts of Piracy. I therefore hope & trust that in this Case you will use your endeavours with that Very respectable Body, and at last [? least] Obtain for Nuttall an indemnity of the expence he has been at as a reward

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for that Merit wich Appeer'd so Honorable to him at the Tril [Trial] in Saving the Propperty in so Critical a Moment as well as the Lives of the Innoscent who of Necessaty must have been lost in attempting to withstand so Daring a Mutiny for the Destruction of the Log book & the Vouchers from the Records of the Court which Nuttal takes with him. I mentioned in my Last as far as I then knew, the Progress made in forwarding the Kitty's Amelia and Prudence Slaves to Havanna, since when, say on the 26th of Sept., the first Schooner sent down has arrived, who brought the Intelligence that on her passage down she was taken in to Barracco by a french Privateer, but was imeadently Liberated & Arrived safe at the Havvana, & on the day of her sailing from thence, the 30 of August, the whole of the Slaves where Sould. She also Brought the disagrable News that the Brig with 200 and the Schooner that was Last Dispatcht with 151 Slaves were also Detain'd in the said Port of Barracoo, but Every Step was taken & no doubt remain'd of their Speady Relace; howsoever these Obstructions are Disagreeable as they Cause Anxiety, Altho' at the Same time they serve to prove that however the Captors might be intended on doing mischief yet they find it not in their power to effect there Purpose."

The Tod brothers read this missive with some consternation. However their correspondent, whose orthography hardly equalled his determined championship of Captain Nuttall, subsequently informed them that Captain Nuttall had been safely and honourably acquitted and was to take his departure for Surinam. It appeared to those who attended the trial, continued the letter with satisfaction, that he had not only acted with the greatest humanity and forbearance, but was entitled to the "highest Applauce for his Manly, prompt & Spirited

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Maner and in Suppressing the most infamous, bloody and well conducted plot that ever was formed to take his Life & run away with the Ship & Propperty."

Captain Nuttall took the Kitty's Amelia once more to Africa in 1806, and brought a cargo of "prime" negroes to Barbados. There he received a letter from George & Robert Tod with instructions to sell for £65 a head, should he, however, have letters from Rivers, Campbell & Co., of Trinidad or John King & Co., St. Thomas, giving him reason to expect £70 a head in short payments, he was to call there, "whereon you see we expect a great Advantage, as there is every probability of the Trade being abolished next Session, and a Bill has now passed the Commons to prevent any Vessels from being employed in the Trade but those now in it, which causes them to be very valuable. You will therefore be careful of the Kitty's Amelia, and use all possible despatch to get home. Wishing you health and success, We are, Dear Sir, yours sincerely,

Geo. & Rob. Tod & Co."

Captain Nuttall took due care of his ship and brought her safely to Liverpool.

Since the Mary was not cleared for Africa when the Abolition Bill was passed Captain Crow was temporarily without a ship. The Kitty's Amelia, however, appears to have discharged her West Indian cargo, changed hands and cleared for Africa in a remarkably short time, for on 27th July, 1807, with Captain Crow as her commander, she sailed for the Guinea Coast.

The London underwriters—Messrs. Kerwen, Woodman & Co.—had written that they would insure his commissions from Liverpool to Africa "at the very low price of 15 gns. percent." They took the opportunity of assuring him that they had never heard underwriters



bestow greater praise upon any commander. Captain Crow's gallant behaviour would always procure him a "decided preference" in whatever vessel he might sail.

Doubtless Mr. Henry Clarke, the new owner of the Kitty's Amelia, congratulated himself on his choice of captain, since the Liverpool insurance agents offered the same terms, which were five per cent lower than was customary.

With Letters of Marque against the French and "protections" against the British pressgang, Crow sailed down the Mersey. He had had his share of fighting and hardship, but success, prosperity and general approbation had made him complacently sure of himself. This, his last voyage, would be a triumphant progression of discomfited Frenchmen; fat and healthy negroes loath to leave his ship; profits for himself and his owners; massive presentation plate and Liverpool's deferential admiration. He was evidently not superstitious, or improbably he may not have heard the history of the Kitty's Amelia.

Not many days out from Liverpool, H.M. frigate, Princess Charlotte, came up and, despite Crow's displayed documents, impressed four of his ablest men. The protections had proved useless. The owners might have been spared the expense of the Letters of Marque. The Kitty's Amelia tacked, crowded on canvas, followed every sail she sighted, but Crow did not succeed in taking a prize.

Bonny River again; twelve ships waiting for slaves. King Holiday in fine fettle. Trade was magnificent; his warehouses full of goods to barter with the black brokers for more slaves; his house, his wives' houses, complete with brass bedsteads, close-stools—every refinement. He had red coats and satin breeches, laced hats, and above all rum and brandy in plenty. Since the slave trading was

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so pleasantly remunerative to both parties, since the white captains sailed away as content as he himself remained, it seemed incomprehensible that no more ships would come to buy slaves. He had been told that his friend Captain Crow was in command of the last ship that would ever come to Bonny. Anxiously he awaited the arrival of the Kitty's Amelia. She came up on the flow, with slack canvas, latticed barricado and completed "house." Her anchor chains raced out, she lay swinging slowly in the tide. Holiday was rowed out to her.

With Crow and a bottle of brandy in the cabin, Holiday began: "Crow, you and me sabby each other long time; and me know you tell me true mouth; for all captains come to river tell me you[r] King and you[r] big mans stop we trade, and s'ppose dat true, what we do?"

Crow told him that it was indeed true. Holiday could not understand the white men's motive. For, he contended, the white men rid themselves of undesirable characters by transporting them to Africa and "much far other country," why then should he be prevented from ridding himself of the "rogue men" of his country? He and his compatriots had not "head for make ship for sen[d] we bad mans for more country and we law is. s'pose some of we Child go bad and we no can sell 'em. we father must kill dem own child." If the trade were finished, there would be many children killed. The prospect moved the poor fellow to tears, recounted Captain Crow. Whether they were tears of regret for the children or the trade-goods he does not explain. Holiday told Crow that he did not think the trade would stop, since his medicine-men had told him so. Had they prophesied with unpalatable accuracy they might have found themselves sailing with the Kitty's Amelia for the West Indies.

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Crow, obliged to await his turn to slave, passed the time pleasantly enough. He went up-river and down-river in search of game, in a boat with nine "pull-away boys." He spent many hours on a small island nine miles below Bonny. He had taken a proprietary interest in the island ever since he had first seen it in 1791. Then it had been "the size of a long boat." By 1807 it had thrust the sea farther back, laid bare three miles of sand and shale to the sun and wind. Crow, the stoutish, the self-sufficient, shed dignity, responsibility, the weight of presentation silver, and roamed the island like a boy. There was a pool of brackish water, small sweet oysters, land and sea birds in the low shrub, and ponderous turtles digging holes for their soft round eggs. One day, lying on the sand it occurred to him that something was lacking. Trees! He would plant them himself. The next time he went to the island he brought a boat-load of sprouting coconuts and his friend, Captain Baldwin, and together they planted landmarks that they themselves would never use.

But Crow's idyllic pursuits were soon at an end. While he was watching the turtles and planting coconuts his chief mate was broaching the ship's spirit kegs and plying the crew with rum and mutinous doctrines. A meeting of the captains then in Bonny was called and the chief mate was tried and dismissed his ship. But since he was of "a respectable Liverpool family" Crow, after his dismissal, allowed him to remain in his cabin.

The slave ships gradually filled their decks and sailed away. Crow could begin to trade. But, in the hurry of fitting out the ship in Liverpool, returned goods from a former voyage, "when the ship was sickly," had been repacked in damp water casks and when they were opened a malignant fever and dysentery broke out among the crew. This was the obscure cause to which Crow attri-

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buted the sickness which was to haunt the Kitty's Amelia throughout the Middle Passage. It seemed to him that every possible misfortune was to retard his slaving. Negroes were difficult to procure. The crew were ill, contagion passed to the slaves assembled, the weather was bad, the ship continually drenched or steaming in the sun.

The slaving finally accomplished, the Kitty's Amelia dropped down the river and crossed the bar, her course set for the island of St. Thomas. Crow's relief at procuring "as fine a cargo of blacks as had ever been taken from Africa" was short-lived. The slaves sickened, despite the care of the ship's two doctors. Fever spread through the hot crowded decks; the heavy seas and rainstorms frequently prevented the negroes from spending any time in the fresh air; calms succeeded the storms and it was sixteen days, instead of three, before Crow reached the island. His sick seamen and slaves needed respite from the sea. Crow was entertained by the Portuguese Governor, who presented him with some monkeys. Crow might have found an addition to his crowded ship unwelcome, but he took them all on board and subsequently found in them diversion in his anxieties. For his misfortunes were not at an end. After he left St. Thomas sickness increased, each day seamen or slaves died and were buried at sea. The chief mate's death added to Crow's anxieties, for should he himself die, who was competent to navigate the ship?

For twelve days the Kitty's Amelia sailed towards the West Indies. The fever and dysentery had abated its first rapid encroachment. Crow watched the monkeys, petted his small black favourite until it, too, sickened and came to him moaning and crying "like an infant; as if it besought me to give it relief." The other monkeys would steal delicacies for it, but despite their care and Crow's

ministrations, it died. To an impartial observer it might seem that Crow merited the indictment he had levelled at the Abolitionists. They reserved their pity, their attention for black, brown "anything but white" men, and he could wax sentimental and pathetic over the suffering of a sick monkey whereas the sufferings of his slaves were worth neither interest nor more than casual reference. He was not unkindly, but if he treated his slaves well it was from motives of humanity well seasoned with pride in his reputation and a shrewd business instinct.

They were eleven hundred miles from land when an alarm was raised. But it was not the French.

"Fire in the afterhold!"

"Fire in the afterhold." It was passed from mouth to mouth.

Crow leapt from his cabin on to the deck. Clouds of smoke belching up from below; two men with blazing clothing; the crew hacking down the stern and quarter boats, pushing, jostling to abandon the ship. Crow shouldered his way among them.

"Is it possible, my lads, that you can desert me when it is your bounden duty, as men, to assist me?"

The seamen hesitated, thought of the forty-five barrels of gunpowder in the magazine.

"Follow me, my brave fellows, and we shall soon save the ship."

Crow's spirit rallied the men and they followed him below. The fire was blazing on the starboard side, the edge of the flames not three feet from the magazine. Again the sailors hesitated.

"It required every possible encouragement on my part," wrote Crow, "to lead them on to endeavour to extinguish the rapidly increasing flames."

The spare sails saved the Kitty's Amelia. Dragged

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from the lockers where they were stowed close at hand, they smothered the fire, and finally, doused with water handed down the hatchway, they quenched it.

The fire had been caused by two young seamen who, owing to the death and illness of the officers, had been delegated to draw the rum rations from the store cask. With them they had taken a spluttering tallow candle which had set the spirit alight.

In his account of the fire Crow makes it abundantly clear to his readers that his courage and promptitude alone saved the ship, modestly adding: "I hope therefore, I shall be excused in assuming to myself more credit (if indeed, credit be due) for the presence of mind by which I was actuated on this occasion, than for anything I ever did in the course of my life."

The slaves crowding round him, clinging to his hands and feet in gratitude. Crow in his element. Above all things he loved popularity.

Eight weeks after she had left St. Thomas the unlucky Kitty's Amelia anchored in Kingston harbour. Both the ship's doctors were ill, thirty of the ship's officers and crew were dead and fifty of the slaves. The doctors died before they could be taken ashore. Crow smarted under misfortune. Captain Hugh Crow, who had prided himself on a clean ship, who had always claimed the bounty for a healthy crew. He landed sore and depressed. Even the friendly greetings of the negroes gathered on the wharf failed to arouse his accustomed repartee.

"God bless Massa! How Massa do this voyage? We hope Massa no fight 'gen this voyage."

They crowded round him, shaking his hand, showing him no resentment for having carried them away from Africa. But Crow was uneasy. There were too many Guinea ships in the harbour. Prices would be low and he

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had lost fifty slaves. He nodded, smiled absently and went to seek his agent and his friends. The news they gave him re-established him in self-esteem, but did little to cheer him. The mortality of the Kitty's Amelia was but one-half that of the sixteen other slave ships in port. The ships had been sent out from England too hastily, dirty and ill-provisioned; the market was glutted with slaves, several of the slavers had lain six months in the harbour, the negroes unsold and dying daily.

But once quit of the Kitty's Amelia, Crow's fortunes swung upward again. His friends advertised his cargo of slaves—they were the finest ever brought to Kingston. Within five days Crow had sold his slaves for better prices than any of the other ships. He could barely credit his good luck. In spite of his losses he had made a handsome profit for himself and his owner.

But Crow did not sail the Kitty's Amelia back to Liverpool, nor in his Memoirs did he relate her subsequent history. He had "business to transact" in Kingston and handed over his command to Captain Brassey, the schooner St. George, that he might sail with the Kitty's Amelia in the first convoy. This was, Crow considered, the most prudent course to adopt. But when had Crow ever shown prudence? It may well be that a superstitious distrust of the Kitty's Amelia played its part in his decision. He returned to Liverpool six months later as a passenger in the Phoenix, and retired with a comfortable fortune to a property which he bought in his native Isle of Man.

Thus ended Liverpool's slave trade. Grass, however, did not grow in her streets, neither did ruin overtake the city. Her prosperity, founded on the slave trade, continued to grow through worthier enterprise. West Indian produce was still unloaded in her docks, larger ships came

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off her stocks, and it was almost with indifference that the Liverpool merchants heard the news of the slaves' emancipation in 1833; 770,000 slaves; and compensation—in the granting of which Liverpool agitation played its part—of £20,000,000 for the owners.

That, in an age when the liberties of the British people were severely abused, when the people themselves were becoming increasingly aware of the disparity between the lot of the worker and the property-owner; when voiced discontents were causing riot and mutiny, it appears perhaps remarkable that no contemporary moral and social injustice obtained such complete and irrevocable redress as the slave trade. But if eclecticism could satisfy the conscience of slave trader, owner and missionary that slavery and its attendant brutalities were not only sanctioned by time and custom but beneficial to the negroes, it is hardly astonishing that the moneyed public should find similar satisfactory justification for the less spectacular but no less intolerable abuses at home.

The negroes picturesquely punctuated history, like cypresses in an Italian landscape, their very blackness gave them prominence. Standing in relief against the drab greyness of starving Irish peasantry, the dull familiarity of herded impressed civilians, the sordidness of English labourers' lives and dwellings, the negro fired imagination. "Humanity is in fashion—it's Popular . . . the Subject is sublime," scoffed Matthew Gregson, and indeed the slave trade appealed to popular imagination: cannibals, gold, elephants' teeth, African sun, tropical storms, witchdoctors, Obeah. It was more satisfying to shiver over the horrors of the Middle Passage than to visit the disquieting filth and poverty of dock or slum. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century society had its counterpart in Europe today, where many educated Europeans find



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complete satisfaction in spending their time and money upon worthy but distant enterprises rather than upon redress at home.

This was the indictment most frequently levelled against the Abolitionists by both financially partial and disinterested citizens. A criticism not entirely unjustified. But the result of right action can be neither changed nor mitigated by inaction, however unworthy, and herein lies the injustice of the charge. To Granville Sharp, Wilberforce, and the Clapham Sect the shadow of the slave ships darkened England's honour, their vision was swept of all else by the driving bows of the Guineamen. Unpractical, as the world interprets disregard for material outcome, they may have been, over-eager, at times, they undoubtedly were; but they were passionately sincere, admitting no half-tones, no compromise. They were determined that England's shameful traffic in human beings must cease, the traces of it be obliterated. But the wisest among them realised that in the Guineamen, beside brutality and indifference, stood courage, endurance and enterprise and that these qualities would not be lost to England, but turned to worthier ventures.

## NOTES



## NOTES ON CHAPTER I

In Williamson's *Liverpool Memorandum Book* (1753) the number of members of the Company trading to Africa in 1752 is given as 101.

The letter of John Foy of Bristol is given in Professor C. M. Macinnes' *England and Slavery*.

For the treatment of the Liverpool and Bristol slave-ship captains I have relied on a *General and Descriptive History of Liverpool*.

For a description of social conditions in Liverpool in the latter half of the eighteenth century I have consulted J. A. Picton's *Memorials of Liverpool*; *The Liverpool Advertiser*; *Liverpool Table Talk*, by James Boardman (1871); Stonehouse's *Streets of Liverpool*, and Troughton's *History of Liverpool*.

It is amusing to note Enfield's description of the Exchange written fifteen years later: "... The spaces under the balustrades are minced in to useless balustrades and the whole garnished with a redundancy of childish ornament."

The description of Liverpool and the slave auction is based on matter published by "A Genuine Dicky Sam" in his *Liverpool and Slavery*. And also from copies of *Williamson's Advertiser* of the period, published by Robert Williamson who kept the Universal Register office in Liverpool at this time.

For the attack and defence of Liverpool against M. Thurot I consulted Gomer Williams' *The Liverpool*

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*Privateers* and the description of the Volunteers is taken from a letter of Samuel Derrick, Master of the Ceremonies at Bath to the Earl of Cork, written in 1760.

The activities of the pressgang are recorded in *Liverpool a few Years Since* by "An Old Stager" (1852), and Ramsay Muir's *History of Liverpool* (1907).

The report from old Calabar is contained in Troughton's *History of Liverpool* and is dated 12th August, 1767.

The statistics and accounts I have compiled from balance-sheets and accounts published by "A Genuine Dicky Sam" and Gomer Williams in their respective works.

For Captain Creevey's history I have also consulted Gomer Williams.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER II

The original petition against the abolition of the slave-trade is in the Picton Reference Library, Liverpool.

For the data for the families and careers of the merchants I have consulted: Thos. and William Earle: *Earle of Allerton Tower* by T. Algernon Earle (1889, printed for private circulation). *Liverpool Table Talk* by James Boardman (1871); *The Liverpool Privateers* by Gomer Williams.

For John and Banastre Tarleton I have consulted: *Memorials of Liverpool*, J. A. Picton (1903), and the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

For William Aspinall: *Birkenhead and its Surroundings*, A. K. Aspinall, 1902; *Clarke Aspinall, A Biography*. Walter Lewin (1893) and *The Memoirs of Captain Hugh Crow* (1827).

For Thomas Leyland: *A Hundred Years of Joint Stock*

## NOTES

*Banking* by W. F. Crick & J. E. Wadsworth (1936).

For William Roscoe: *Life of William Roscoe* by Henry Roscoe (1833), *Liverpool Table Talk* and details from the Rathbone family papers.

For the Rathbone family: *Memoranda of Family Traditions and Facts*, privately printed for the Rathbone family; *Records of the Rathbone Family*, edited by Emily A. Rathbone (1913, privately printed); *Rathbone Family Records*, MS. in possession of Mrs. Hugh Rathbone of Greenbank, Liverpool, who kindly placed them at my disposal at Greenbank; and *William Rathbone, A Memoir*, by Eleanor Rathbone (1905).

In 1766 the *Vine*, Captain Simmons, Bonny-Dominica, broke the record, accomplishing the trip in seven months and ten days.

Liverpool also built some larger ships for the slave trade, notably the *Hercules*, 1,200 tons, thirty guns, and the *Mercury*, 1,400 tons, twenty-eight guns.

John Barnes, Governor of Senegal from 1776-36, said that: "In the earlier period of the African trade, beads, etc., were much used, but it is now generally reduced to a demand for necessities."

Alexander Falconbridge is reported to have said in giving evidence in 1789 before the Lords of the Committee of Council in their enquiry into the slave trade: "Few guns were kept in Africa for shew; has seen great numbers lying in a heap with other goods. . . . Many black people said these ordinary trade guns kill more out of the butt than the muzzle." (Abstract of Evidence, 1790.)

The list of goods was made by Captain Hugh Crow who paid them for a slave at Bonny. *Chilloe*, *bandanoe*, *neccannee*, *photae* and *cashtoo* were the names of various Manchester and Indian cotton materials.

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Falconbridge gives details regarding the native chiefs' import and export duties and their concessions.

*The Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council relative to the Slave Trade, 1790* (Falconbridge) gives detailed evidence of the methods used to procure slaves in Africa.

The description of Cape Corse or Coast Castle is contained in Captain Nathaniel Uring's *History of the Voyages & Travels of Capt. Nathaniel Uring* (1726), a copy of the first edition of which was made available to me by the courtesy of Messrs. Maggs.

King Naimbana's pronouncement on the white man is recorded by Anna Maria Falconbridge in *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone*.

"Coming in flying houses to take away poor black prisoners, etc." is a quotation from a letter published in the *General Evening Post*, No. 6,033, 13th June, 1772.

The smoke signals are described by Captain William Snelgrave in: *A New Account of some Part of Guinea & the Slave Trade* (1754), for which I am indebted to Messrs. Maggs, who allowed me to use their copy for reference.

Donnan, in 1726, wrote: "We have very often lain by before a town and fired a gun for the natives to come off, and inform Town or Place it was, but were never the wiser, for no Soul came near us. But at length we learned by some Ships that were trading down the coast, that the natives seldom ventured about for fear of being pany'ar'd.' (kidnapped).

The report of the Captain of the Greyhound is taken from the Hobhouse MSS., and that of Captain John Erskine from Gomer Williams' *The Liverpool Privateers*.

Alexander Falconbridge was born in Bristol and lived in Liverpool. He became Ship's Surgeon and wrote *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788).

The facts relating to the auctioneering of slaves are

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given by him and also in the reports of the Evidence before the Parliamentary Committees of 1790-1.

For the law-suit of Mr. Nickelson of Poole I have used Gomer Williams' account in *The Liverpool Privateers*.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER III

Hogarth, in *The Harlot's Progress* depicts his heroine attended by a negro boy.

Matthew Dyer, a goldsmith, worked at the Crown in Duck Lane, Orchard Street, Westminster, and advertised in the *London Advertiser* of 1756.

In Colonel Kirke's advertisement for his runaway slave in the *London Gazette*, March, 1685, the boy is described as wearing a silver collar with the Colonel's coat-of-arms and cypher. The advertisement for Lady Bromfield's slave appeared in the *Daily Journal*, 28th September, 1728.

Prof. C. M. Macinnes, in his *England and Slavery*, publishes the following epitaph of Scipio Africanus:

"Here  
Lieth the Body of  
Scipio Africanus,  
NEGRO SERVANT TO YE RIGHT  
HONOURABLE CHARLES WILLIAM  
EARL OF SUFFOLK AND BRANDON,  
Who died ye 21 December,  
1720, aged 18 years."

I have taken my account of the Mansfield case from the Annual Register, Vol. 15 and Granville Sharp's summary of it, together with his comment on a "Planter's" protest, in Appendix IX. (*Remarks on the Judgment of the*



## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

*Court of King's Bench, in the case of Stewart & Somersett*) of his *The Just Limitations of Slavery* (1776). And from *A Memoir of Granville Sharp*, by Charles Stuart, which I have also used for the account of Jonathan Strong, together with that of Professor Coupland in his life of Wilberforce.

Sharp also published the cases of *Cay v. Crichton* and *Rogers alias Rigges v Jones*, in his appendices X and XI of the same pamphlet.

"The law takes no notice of a negro": Justice Powell's declaration is recorded in 2 *Salkeld*. 666.

The statutes legalising slavery were: 10 Will. III. cap. 26 (1698), 5 Geo. II. cap. 27 (1732), 32 Geo. III. cap. 31 (1792).

George III's instructions to the Governor of Virginia are quoted in Bancroft's *American Revolution*, Vol. III.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER IV

The history of Captain Lace and the Massacre of Old Calabar I have drawn from the testimony of Captain John Ashley Hall from facts obtained from his boatswain, Thomas Rutter, who had been boatswain in the *Canterbury* at the time of the massacre; and the evidence of Ambrose Lace himself, given before the Parliamentary Committee in 1789; contained in the *Abridgment of the Evidence taken before a Committee of the whole House. To whom it was referred to consider of the Slave Trade* (1789 and 1790) and the *Liverpool Privateers*, by Gomer Williams. It is interesting to note that Gomer Williams quoted Captain Lace's reply to Mr. Jones' letter, but was obviously ignorant of the facts which were reported in the Evidence taken before the Parliamentary Committee,

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since he remarks that "it seems to have some reference to the two brothers carried off after the massacre in 1767."

A genuine *Dicky Sam* gives Captain Roberts' history in a *Historical Account of the Liverpool-African Slave Trade*.

I have drawn Robert Bostock's history from the MS. copies of his correspondence and the original journal of the voyages of the Bloom in the Picton Reference Library.

It is interesting to note that Robert Bostock's own accounts differ from those quoted by Gomer Williams in his *Liverpool Privateers*, taken from "the original account books" (presumably Leyland's). He gives the sum total as £9,858 2s. 10d. against Bostock's £9,635 9s. 7d. although both accounts agree on Bostock's commission. Again, I cannot make Captain Whittle's original accounts of the Lottery, which I consulted in the Picton Reference Library, tally with those given by Gomer Williams.

Anna Maria Falconbridge, who visited the Banana Islands in 1792, wrote "The inhabitants are mostly vassals to one Mr. Cleavland, a Blackman who claims the sovereignty of the Island from hereditary right. . . . In the centre of the town is a Court House; here we observed a bed neatly made up, a wash hand-bason, a clean napkin, and every apparatus of a bed chamber. This had a very curious appearance; but we were told the late Mr. Cleavland used to indulge himself with the luxury of sleeping in this airy place, and the inhabitants superstitiously thinking (though he has been dead more than a year) he yet invisibly continues the practice, they would not, upon any account, forego the daily ceremony of making up his bed, placing fresh water &c, as was the custom in his lifetime." This, presumably, is the same Cleveland who was Robert Bostock's African agent.

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### NOTES ON CHAPTER V

For John Newton's history I have consulted: *An Authentic Narrative of some Interesting Particulars in the life of . . . . .*" by John Newton, 1788.

Vol. I of *Letters, Sermons & a Review of Ecclesiastical History*, by John Newton (1780).

*The Works of the Rev. John Newton & Memoir of his Life*, by Rev. R. Cecil, A.M. (1872).

*Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade*. John Newton (London, 1788).

*Cardiphonia*, a series of letters by John Newton. Also Professor R. Coupland's biography of Wilberforce (Oxford, 1923).

Details of Ormond's career are given in *The Report of the Directors of the Sierra Leone Company* (1794).

### NOTES ON CHAPTER VI

For the account of the sailors' riots in Liverpool I have consulted: Stonehouse's *Streets of Liverpool*, *Liverpool Table Talk*, by Boardman and Gomer Williams' *Liverpool Privateers*, from which I have also drawn the account of the Clayton's capture by pirates and Henry Harrison's description of the slave mutiny in the *Perfect*.

The extracts from the log of the brig *Ranger* are taken from the original MS. in the Picton Reference Library, Liverpool.

Details of the life of the seamen in the Guinea trade have been compiled from Alexander Falconbridge's account and from the evidence of himself, Captain Knox, Jerome Weuves and others, given before the Parliamentary Committee in 1789. Knox told the Committee

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that on his first voyage as master of the Liverpool ship *Fairy*, in 1782, he had a crew of forty-five men, more than one half of which were landmen, "seamen not then to be got."

Captain Crow tells the story of the Bolton in his *Memoirs*.

Prof. C. M. Macinnes gives an account of the Narborough in his *England and Slavery* (1934).

For the mutiny of the *Thomas* I have consulted Brooke's *Liverpool in the Last Quarter of the Eighteenth Century* (1853).

## NOTES CHAPTER VII

The whole of the material for this chapter I have compiled from the evidence of fort governors, and employees, slave ship captains and surgeons given before the Parliamentary Committees called to investigate the conditions of the slave trade in 1789 and 1790, and contained in: the *Minutes of the Evidence taken before a Committee of the Whole House* (1789 and 1790) and *The Report of the Lords Committee of Council relative to the Slave Trade and the treatment of the slaves in the Sugar Islands* (1790). I have also consulted Barbot's accounts of the Guinea Coast, published in Volume V of *Churchills Voyages* in 1732 (by courtesy of Messrs. Francis Edwards).

The facts relating to Captain Snelgrave are recounted in his *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade* (1734) and Falconbridge's evidence is supplemented by his *Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788).

The incidents relating to Captain Crow are taken from his *Memoirs*.

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### NOTES FOR CHAPTER VIII

The material for the conditions in the Middle Passage has been drawn from the evidence heard before the Parliamentary Committees of 1789 and 1790; from Alexander Falconbridge's *Account of the Slave Trade* and his wife's letters to a friend; from Captain Hugh Crow's *Memoirs*; Captain William Snelgrave's *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade*; and the log of the *Ranger*.

I studied the case of the *Zong* in *Reports of Cases argued and determined in the Court of King's Bench* from the MSS. of Rt. Hon. Sylvester Douglas, Baron Glenbervie (1831) Vol. III, pp. 232-5, and that of the later case *Tatham v. Hodgson* in *Reports of Cases argued and determined in the Court of King's Bench from Michaelmas Term 35th George III to Trinity Term 36th George III*, by Charles Durnford and Edward Hyde East (1796), by courtesy of the Librarian of Gray's Inn and Mr. Barnard Faraday, Member of the Inn.

In connection with the case of the *Zong* it is interesting to compare the original and authentic law report with the version given by Charles Stuart in his *A Memoir of Granville Sharp* (New York, 1836) on page 30 of which he writes: "... the verdict of the jury on the first trial was in favour of the master and the owners!!" and further on: "The result (of the new trial) was a verdict in favor of the underwriters."

### NOTES ON CHAPTER IX

For conditions of the slaves, and slave labour in the West Indies I have consulted: Bryan Edwards' *History of the West Indies*, (Second Edition, London, 1794).

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The evidence contained in the report of the Lords of the Committee of Council, 1790, of: various plantation owners; plantation and naval surgeons; Sir Ashton Warner Byam, the Attorney-General for Grenada and its dependencies; Lord Macartney, Governor of Grenada, the Grenadines and Tobago; Sir John Dalling, Bart., soldier and Governor in Jamaica; Sir R. Payne, Governor General of the Leeward Islands; Sir Archibald Campbell, Governor of Jamaica; and the Admirals, Lord Rodney, Lord Shuldham, Barrington, Arbuthnot, Edwards and Hotham.

The advertisement from the *Barbadoes Gazette* is quoted by Professor C. M. Macinnes in his *England and Slavery*.

The abstract of the will of Joseph Peart is contained in *Prerogative Court of Canterbury Register Pitt, Folio 159*, and for which I am indebted to Mr. Cregoe D. P. Nicholson.

The letter of Dgiagola was published in the London *General Evening Post*, No. 6,033, 13th June, 1772. Dgiagola's history is taken from a letter written by his master (unnamed) to a friend in Philadelphia, published by Granville Sharp in his pamphlet *The Just Limitation of Slavery* (London, 1776).

## NOTES ON CHAPTER X

For account of the French Missions I have consulted Vols. I and II of *Nouveau Voyage aux Isles de l'Amerique*, by Père Labat (1724), and the evidence given before the Parliamentary Committee of 1790.

For the history of Codrington I am indebted to Professor F. J. Klingberg's researches published as a reprint from the *American Journal of History*.

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

Colonel Codrington's will is quoted from Sir Nathaniel Lloyd to John Chamberlayne, N.P., N.d., in S.P.G. MSS. (L.C.Trans.) A5, No. CVIII.

The advice of the Committee is quoted from the letter of the Society's Attorneys—John Frere, Christopher Moe, John Carter and John Shepley to Daniel Burton. 28th May, 1762, in the S.P.G. MSS. (L.C.Trans.) B.6, No. 69.

The letter regarding the branding of mission slaves from Arthur Holt to the Bishop of London is dated 16th August, 1732, and is in the Fulham MSS. ("Barbados," No. 68).

Abel Alleyne's letter to Phillip Bearcroft is in the S.P.G. MSS. (L.C.Trans.), B8, No. 48.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER XI

Samuel Derrick wrote his impressions of Liverpool in: *Letters Written from Leverpoole, Chester, Corke etc.*, 1767.

Sir William Meredith, Baronet, of Hanbury and Bowden in Cheshire, Tory Member for Liverpool, elected 1761. He published his views on the disputes in America in: *Historical Remarks on the Taxation of Free States* (1788).

For the Boston Tea party and the American War I have consulted *Boston Mobs before the Revolution*, by A. P. Peabody; *Essays Historical and Literary*, Vol. II, John Fiske, Bancroft's *American Revolution* and have quoted Dr. James Currie's letter from *Memoir of J.C.* by his son, Wallace Currie (1831).

The letter of instructions to the Captain of the *Enterprise* is copied from the original in the Picton Reference Library, Liverpool. I have used Picton's *Memorials of*

## NOTES

*Liverpool* for the statistics of shipping, privateers, prizes, and bounty to seamen.

Paul Jones used France as his base when he commanded the *Bonhomme Richard* in 1779. His ship and three others of which he was Commodore were fitted out in France.

A reproduction of Benjamin Franklin's original letter to the Comte de Vergennes is given in *American History*, by D. Saville Muzzey (1911).

The account of the slave ship *Essex* is given in Gomer Williams' *Liverpool Privateers*, he also refers to the "Mossley Hill, Captain Hewan." This appears to be an incorrect rendering of the Moseley Hill, Captain Ewing, of which Alexander Falconbridge writes in his: *An Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa* (1788).

Other facts of the state of the slave trade during the war are gathered from the evidence of slave ship captains given before the Parliamentary Committees of 1789-90.

Rodney's victory on 12th April was celebrated in Jamaica for many years by the firing of ship's guns. Captain Hugh Crow in his *Memoirs* gives the reason for the prohibition of this custom. "The 12th of April being held in Jamaica as a day of festivity, in commemoration of Rodney's victory; every ship showed her Colours, and it was customary on hauling them down at sunset to fire a gun. On that day a large sloop lay near us, manned chiefly by negroes, and the master being on shore, these fellows must needs fire a gun along with the rest. They omitted to draw the charge with which it had been previously loaded, and whilst our doctor and mate were taking coffee on the quarter-deck, a double-headed shot from their gun took off the thigh of the former and his immediate death was the melancholy consequence. Owing to this unfortunate accident, the firing of guns on



## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

the same occasion, at Kingston, was from that time entirely discontinued."

Thomas Taylor's correspondence was edited from the original letters, by W. Barnard Faraday, LL.B., and was published by the Literary and Philosophical Society in *Manchester Memoirs*, Vol. XLIV (1900), No. 14. All the facts relating to the Volunteers are taken from Taylor's letters to his friend Lieut. Colonel John Leigh-Philips. For the peace terms and conditions I have consulted C. H. Van Tyne's *The American Revolution* (1905) and John Fiske.

Villemain records Mirabeau's study, of the English constitution in *Literature au XVIIIe Siecle*, Vol. IV.

The law passed prohibiting public read-rooms is: 39 George III, c. 79 §15.

The decrees in France are recorded in *Causes de la Revolution*, by Cassagnac, Vol. I.

Thomas Paine quoted from *The Rights of Man* (1791).

For the risings in Santo Domingo I have consulted *The Negro in American Life*, Jerome Dowd, M.A. (1927); Bryan Edwards' *History of the West Indies*, Vol. III; *Chronological History of the West Indies*, Vol. III, by T. Southey (1827), and M. Rainsford's *The Black Empire of Hayti* (1807).

The details of Colonel Tarleton's life and career may be found in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; *Liverpool A Few Years Since*, by An Old Stager, and Picton's *Memorials of Liverpool*.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER XII

For my account of the first debates on the slave trade I have consulted Cobbett's *Parliamentary History*; Prot.

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Coupland's *Wilberforce*; and *Hansard XXVIII*, 1789-91.

The letter quoted, in Matthew Gregson's handwriting, is an undated, unsigned or addressed letter contained in the Holt and Gregson Papers (Collection 10) in the Picton Reference Library, Liverpool. William Rathbone's part in helping Clarkson is recorded in the Rathbone family records, published and unpublished.

For Clarkson's visit to Liverpool I have consulted these records: Gomer Williams' *Liverpool Privateers* (for his interview with Chaffers and Lace); *Granville Sharp, A Memoir*, by Charles Stuart, and Clarkson's *Life* (for his visit to Paris) and also Professor Coupland's *Wilberforce*.

The extract from Dr. Currie's letter to Wilberforce and that written on the subject of the press restrictions are taken from *Dr. Currie, A Memoir*, by William Wallace Currie his son; and his letter to Miss Cropper giving his opinion on the petition, from the unpublished original in the Picton Reference Library, Liverpool. Liverpool's reactions to the Parliamentary proceedings are given in Picton's *Memorials of Liverpool*; Gomer Williams' *Liverpool Privateers*;

*The Licitness of the Slave Trade* was published in Liverpool and printed by H. Hodgson in 1788.

Robert Bostock's letter is taken from his original letter book (copies of his Correspondence) in the Picton Reference Library, Liverpool.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER XIII

The Charter incorporating the St. George's Bay Company as the Sierra Leone Company is: 31 George III, C.55.

The whole of the material for this chapter I have taken

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

from the *Report Delivered by the Court of Directors of the Sierra Leone Company to the General Court of Proprietors. Thursday, 27th March, 1794*; their report: *An Account of the Colony of Sierra Leone* by James Phillips, 1795, and *Two Voyages to Sierra Leone during the Years, 1791-2-3. In a Series of Letters*, by Anna Maria Falconbridge (1794).

Bance Island later became known as Bunce Island.

The account of the Settlement in New South Wales is given in *The First Fleet*, edited by Owen Rutter (1937).

In the *Journal of the House of Commons*, Vol. 62, appeared, on 21st January, 1807, the following report of the Sierra Leone Company's petition to the Government: "In consequence of having to protect, and for a time support many of the said colonists, and also of the capture of the said Settlement by a French force, and various other calamities, the capital of the Company was so greatly reduced, that the Petitioners were under the necessity of petitioning the House from time to time for pecuniary aid to enable them to maintain the said Settlement; and that a Committee of the House having been appointed to investigate the prayer of a petition for pecuniary aid . . . after full examination of the evidence reported it was their opinion (an opinion in which the Petitioners entirely concurred) that the objects for which the colony of Sierra Leone was instituted would be more easily and effectively maintained, by transferring the Civil and Military Authority of the Colony to the Crown."

Thus, Sierra Leone became a Crown Colony.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER XIV

The meeting of the Council and the Assembly of Jamaica and Bryan Edwards' speech were published in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1790 in pamphlet form.

## NOTES

For the social conditions prevalent in the West Indies at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries I have consulted: Bryan Edwards' *History of the West Indies*, Vol. 2 (1794), and Père Labat's *Nouveau Voyage Aux Isles de L'Amerique* (1724). Lady Nugent's Journal issued for private circulation in 1839 and republished for the Institute of Jamaica, edited by Frank Cundall, F.S.A., in 1907, and Matthew Gregory Lewis's *Journal of a Residence among the Negroes in the West Indies* (1845).

## NOTES ON CHAPTER XV

The merchant shipping statistics in this chapter are compiled from Gomer Williams' lists in *The Liverpool Privateers*, I have also consulted him for the history of the Harlequin, the Pilgrim and Captain M'Iloy.

In 1792 the Duke of Brunswick "warned the French Assembly that if they did not forthwith liberate the King and return to their allegiance they would be held personally responsible, and answer for it with their heads and that if the palace were forced, or the royal family insulted, exemplary punishment would be inflicted by the total destruction of Paris." Injudicious menaces which hastened the King's execution.

For the activities of the Friends of Peace I have consulted Picton's *Memorials of Liverpool*; the unpublished diaries of Jonathan Binns, copied by his grandson, in the Picton Reference Library, Liverpool; *Memoir of Jonathan Currie* by William Wallace Currie; and the Rathbone family papers. Both the excerpts from William Rathbone's letters are taken from the unpublished family records in the possession of Mrs. Hugh Rathbone of Greenbank.

## THE ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

The activities of the pressgang are recorded in Picton's *Memorials of Liverpool*; Stonehouse's *Streets of Liverpool*; and *Liverpool a few Years Since*, by "An old Stager" (the Rev. James Aspinall).

Captain Hugh Crow's adventures are recorded in his *Memoirs of Captain Hugh Crow*.

The list of the French privateers cruising off the British West Indian islands was published in the *Liverpool Advertiser* on 15th December, 1806.

For Jamaica's reactions to the wars, I have consulted Lady Nugent's *Journal*, and for the developments in Santo Domingo, *The Black Empire of Hayti*, M. Rainsford.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER XVI

For the Liverpool elections, and the city's endeavours to prevent the Abolition I have consulted Picton's *Memorials of Liverpool*; Baines' *History of Liverpool*; the election broadsheets; and Gomer Williams' *Liverpool Privateers* from which I have also taken the shipping and export figures. Picton appears to have confused the tonnage of the ships with the number of slaves carried.

The Parliamentary debates are given in *Hansard* and I am indebted to Professor Coupland for extracts from Wilberforce's diaries, the extracts from his letters, and Hannah More's description of his ante-room.

## NOTES ON CHAPTER XVII

The accounts of the taking of the Young Amelia were published in Liverpool's *Saturday's Advertiser* of 8th October, 1803 (incorrectly termed: *Saturday's Observer*,

#### NOTES

by Mr. Hand); and Billinge's *Liverpool Advertiser*, 17th October, 1803.

I am indebted to Mr. Charles Hands' researches into the history and correspondence of the Kitty's Amelia's voyage under Captain Nuttall, the results of which are printed in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire & Cheshire*, V. 82.

For her last voyage I have used Captain Crow's own account.



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